WHAT IF... CATHERINE OF ARAGON'S SON HAD LIVED?

ROME'S BLOODIEST EMPERORS

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF SAYING "I DO"

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The secret world of Emily Brontë

Jack the Ripper

The mystery of the Whitechapel Murderer

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WELCOME JULY 2020

Fighter pilots bask in the sun, with their Hawker Hurricane Mk I fighters behind them

The Battle of Britain – the aerial campaign fought over southern England during the summer and autumn of 1940 – is remembered as one of Britain's finest hours. On the ground, civilians could only watch as high above them, pilots of **RAF Fighter Command drove back the German Luftwaffe and achieved one of Britain's most important World War II victories**. This month, 80 years on, acclaimed military author and historian Patrick Bishop brings to life the courage and experiences of the RAF 'fighter boys', who defended Britain in 1940. Turn to page 26 to read more.

This summer, many will also be commemorating the 70th anniversary of another important, albeit less well-known, conflict: **the Korean War, which resulted in the deaths of millions of civilians and soldiers alike**. See extraordinary images of the conflict from page 60.

Elsewhere, we investigate how marriage – and everything related to it – has changed over the centuries. **From hen and stag celebrations to the big day itself, it's a fascinating look at nuptial traditions, both old and new** (*p39*). We also examine the reigns of some of Rome's bloodiest emperors (*p52*), consider **how different British history could have been had Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's baby son survived** (*p68*); take another look at Victorian England's most notorious serial killer, Jack the Ripper (*p50*); and **explore the secluded world of Emily Brontë** (*p16*).

Lockdowns may be gradually lifting, but there are still many people who are self-isolating or unable to leave their homes. **Don't forget, our subscription deals offer free UK delivery, right to your door**, so you don't have to miss out on a single issue of *BBC History Revealed*. You can find more details on page 24.

In the meantime, wherever you are in the world, stay safe.

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

350
The speed in mph that most Spitfire planes can achieve in level flight.

6
The number of months that Emily Brontë taught at Miss Patchett's Ladies Academy near Halifax.

12
The number of ex-consuls Roman Emperor Domitian had executed for conspiring against him.

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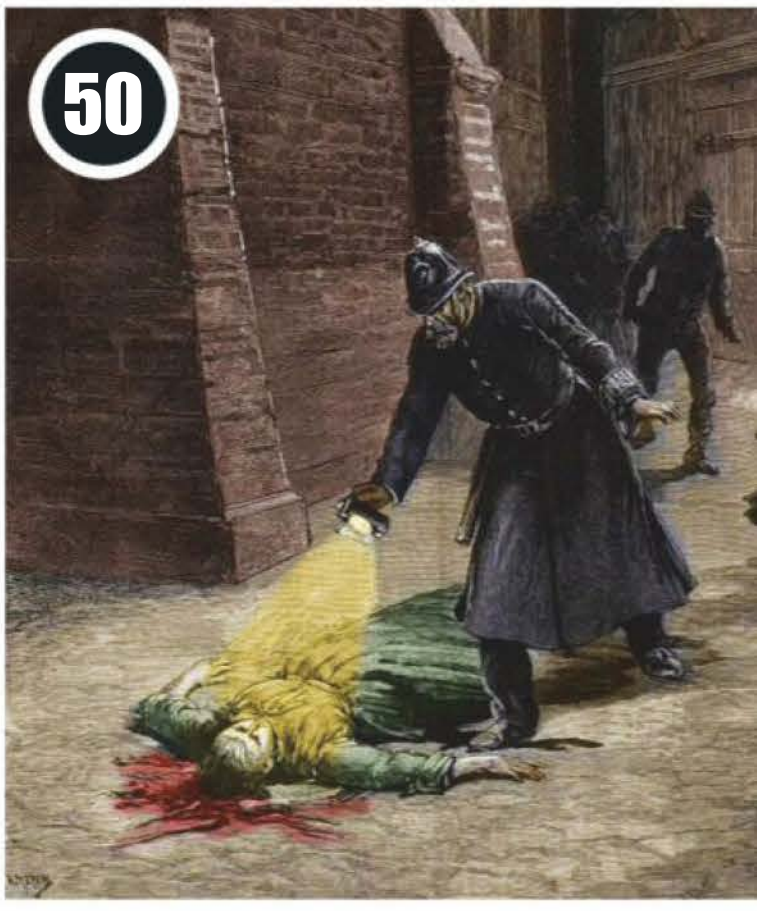
▲ With an heir secured, Henry VIII may have turned his attention to conquest



▲ Jack the Ripper haunted Whitechapel, "an overcrowded pit of poverty and crime"

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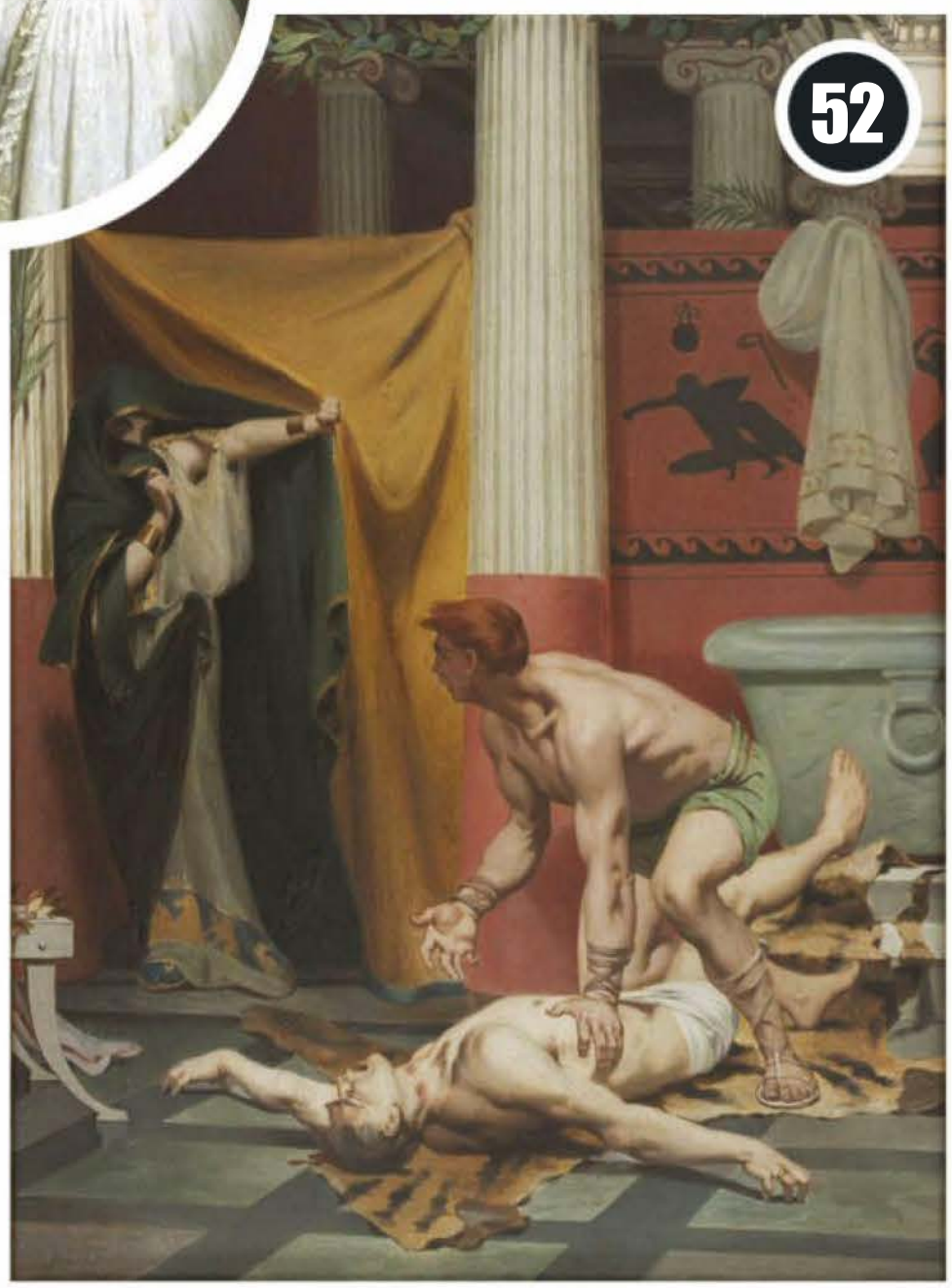
39

◀ It was Victoria and Albert's nuptials in 1840 that popularised the white wedding gown



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▲ Roman emperor Commodus was eventually murdered – as were many of Rome's worst tyrants

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▲ Just five years after World War II, the Korean War placed global peace in jeopardy once more

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SNAPSHOTS

1982 TIGER QUEEN

Actor and animal rights activist Tippi Hedren welcomes a surprise visitor through her kitchen window at the Shambala Preserve in Acton, California. Hedren – whose first credited role was in Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 thriller *The Birds* – founded Shambala in 1972 as an animal sanctuary for endangered big cats, including Bengal tigers, African lions, bobcats and leopards.

One of the most famous residents of Shambala was Neil, a 'pet' lion who lived with Hedren and her family – including daughter Melanie Griffith – during the 1970s. Neil himself starred in Hedren's 1981 film *Roar*, which saw the family living with and raising wild big cats – swimming with, and even sharing beds with their lions. An estimated 70 people were injured during filming, including the then teenage Griffith, who required 50 stitches to her face after a lion attack.

ALAMY

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1954 CHORAL SENSATIONS

Dressed in long gowns, female students at Indiana University audition to join one of the institution's most famous musical clubs, The Belles. Competition was fierce; under the direction of Eugene Bayless, who founded the group in 1953, the all-female chorus was considered one of the finest university choral groups in the US. During the group's long history, The Belles toured American military installations in the Far East, as well as Iceland, Greenland, Labrador and Newfoundland.

SNAPSHOTS

1938
FUN IN THE SUN

Despite suffering nine years of America's Great Depression, crowds of people flock to Coney Island beach, New York, determined to soak up the sun and enjoy themselves. By the early 20th century, Coney Island had become a hub of entertainment and a popular destination for New Yorkers – boasting a pier, boardwalk and a host of amusement parks. In the 1920s, the island's popularity boomed, mainly thanks to the extension of the subway line, which meant that millions of people could now reach the island for the price of just a nickel, looking for cheap fun and a day in the sun.

GETTY IMAGES

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH....

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

ANTIQUE AMERICAN FLAG PUZZLES ARLINGTON TIME CAPSULE EXPLORERS

Conservators in the US have opened a 'memorabilia box' placed in the hollow cornerstone of Arlington Cemetery Memorial Amphitheater in 1915. Among the contents of the copper box was an old fangled US flag just 46 stars adorn the tiny silken flag, though at the time the capsule was sealed there were 48 states in the union. The box also revealed a programme for an American Civil War event coinciding with the 50th anniversary of that conflict's end, documents bound in red tape, coins, stamps, a Bible and other items.

LOCKED-DOWN VOLUNTEERS REDRAW MAP OF ROMAN BRITAIN

Live digs are on hold as lockdown continues, but stuck at home volunteers have uncovered more about Roman Britain. Using aerial photographs, they've found 30 unknown settlements and 20 extra miles of Roman road in southwest England (plus prehistoric mounds and medieval farms), and they've only examined one tenth of the images. "The types of sites are what you would expect in this region, but it's the number that is so surprising," says Dr Chris Smart, a landscape archaeologist at the University of Exeter.

ELIZABETH FRASER/U.S. ARMY/ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY X3, ALAMY X1, ALLISON EMMERSON, COURTESY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF POMPEII X1, UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN X1, GETTY IMAGES X2

ONE-STOP MUMMY-MAKING WORKSHOP FULFILLED ALL YOUR AFTERLIFE NEEDS

Egyptologists have dug through 42 tons of sand to excavate a 'one stop shop' funeral home: a place where ancient Egyptians could be embalmed or purchase a funeral 'package', including a burial. The complex in Saqqara, a famous necropolis contains what seems to be a mummification workshop. Within were cups still bearing the names of the substances they held. There was also a ventilation shaft: "If you're doing evisceration down there, you need air moving in to get rid of insects," says archaeologist Dr Ramadan Hussein.

DID THE ROMANS RECYCLE? IN POMPEII AT LEAST, THAT MAY HAVE BEEN THE CASE

It seems that the ancient Roman city of Pompeii buried by volcanic ash in AD 79 may have had green credentials. Huge mounds of rubbish found outside the city were thought to be debris from an earthquake in AD 62, but it now appears they were akin to a recycling depot. According to Professor Allison Emmerson, an American academic working at Pompeii, the piles of ancient trash weren't simply "dumped" to be forgotten. "They're outside the walls being collected and sorted, to be resold inside the walls."

TAP O' NOTH MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE LARGEST PICTISH SETTLEMENTS EVER

Tap O' Noth hill fort in Aberdeenshire has emerged as a surprise candidate for one of the most important settlements in Pictish history and its size seemingly rivalled the great post Roman settlements of Europe. Radiocarbon dating has placed the fort to the 5th or 6th century AD, and the settlement of some 800 huts inside the fort to the 3rd century AD. Professor Gordon Noble, who led the research, says there may have been 4,000 people living on the hill. "In a Pictish context, we have nothing else that compares to this," he adds.

17lb

The weight of a 95 per cent pure gold stamp belonging to an heir apparent to the Chinese Ming Dynasty. Measuring 10x10cm, it has a tortoise-shaped handle on the reverse.

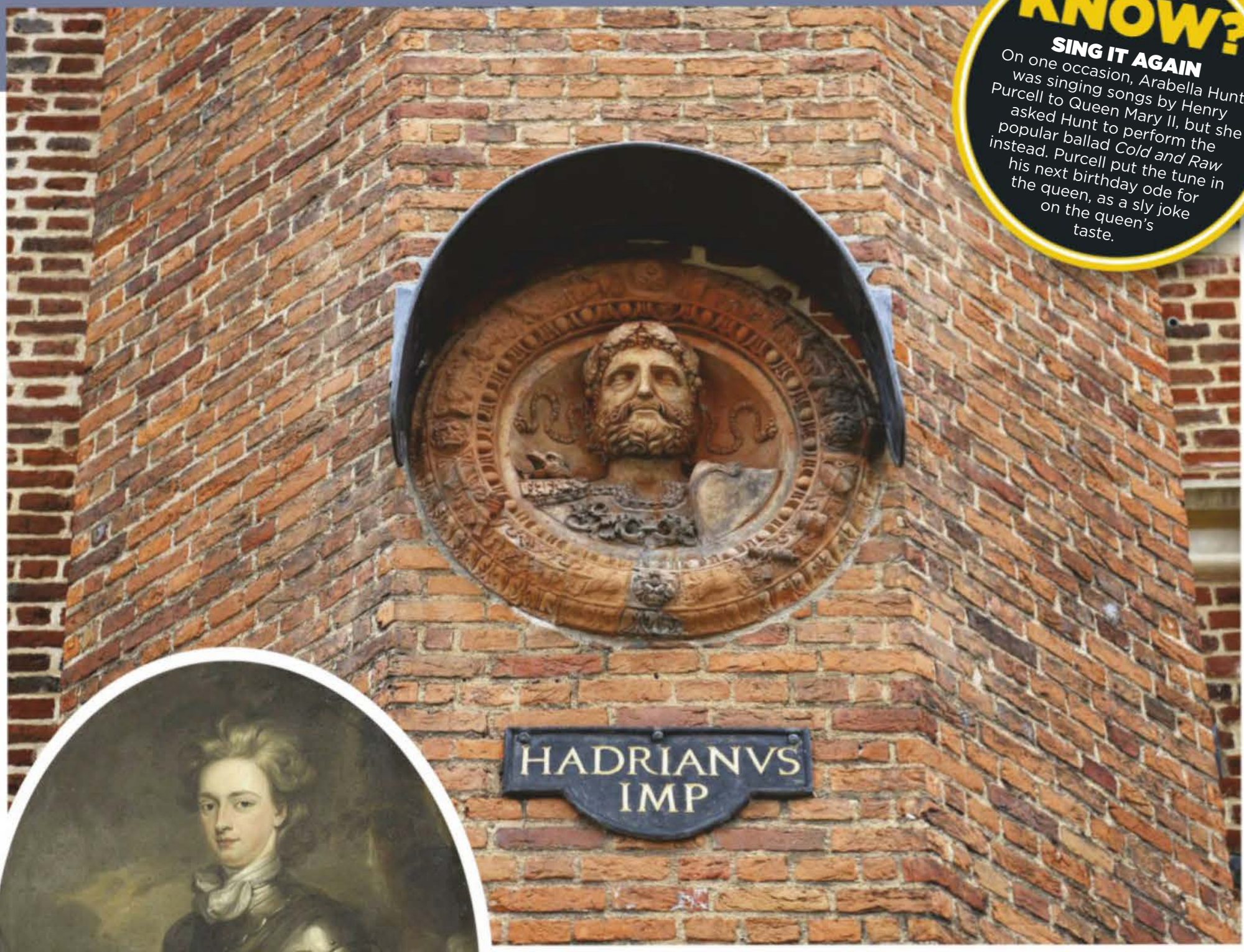
MARILYN MONROE HAD FOUR DAILY SKINCARE ROUTINES

We now know precisely how Marilyn Monroe cared for her skin in 1959, at least. As part of an upcoming exhibit, New York's Makeup Museum has published her prescription from skincare to the stars supremo Ernő László, who also consulted with the likes of Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly. It includes four routines for different circumstances, with the nighttime one being the most involved it required two cleanses and overnight controlling lotion for the nose and chin.

DID YOU KNOW?

SING IT AGAIN

On one occasion, Arabella Hunt was singing songs by Henry Purcell to Queen Mary II, but she asked Hunt to perform the popular ballad *Cold and Raw* instead. Purcell put the tune in his next birthday ode for the queen, as a sly joke on the queen's taste.



Many objects connected to LGBT+ history can be found at Hampton Court Palace, including Hadrian's bust (*above*) at Base Court. The Earl of Albemarle (*left*) had apartments next to King William III's private rooms at the palace, sparking rumours of a romantic relationship

Arabella Hunt (*standing*) sung for Queen Mary II, but she faced scrutiny for marrying a woman

Cheryl Dunye's 1996 film, *The Watermelon Woman,* made history as the first feature film created by a black lesbian woman

ALAMY X1, GETTY IMAGES X2, SHUTTERSTOCK X1, HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES/RICHARD LEA-HAIR X1

LGBT+ collections curator at Historic Royal Palaces

Matthew Storey

HOW MUCH DOES THE HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES (HRP) COLLECTION TELL US ABOUT THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY?

There are traces of LGBT+ lives everywhere in the architecture of the palaces and the collections. I'd recommend walking through somewhere like Hampton Court Palace with your eyes open for LGBT+ histories. You'll be surprised by what you see. From the bust of the Roman Emperor Hadrian who made his lover Antinous a god that greets every visitor in the first courtyard, to overlooked eroticised paintings of two women, examples of same sex love and desire are everywhere. Queer lives are built into the architecture, with the apartments of the royal favourite the Earl of Albemarle right next to King William III's private rooms. We'll never know the truth about that relationship, but it gave rise to rumours of same sex love at the time. We also have incredible objects made by LGBT+ people. We care for the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection an internationally significant collection of over 10,000 items of royal and court dress which contains remarkable items by gay designers, including Norman Hartnell.

WHAT'S THE MOST INTERESTING PIECE OF RESEARCH YOU HAVE UNCOVERED?

My favourite story is of the court musician Arabella Hunt. In 1680, Arabella married a James Howard, who was in fact a woman called Amy Poulter. Amy had courted Arabella in male and female clothes, and when the case was brought to court, she claimed it was a joke that had got out of hand. To me, marriage seems to be taking a joke very far indeed, so I'm not convinced by Amy's defence. The story raises so many questions of how and what Amy and Arabella felt or knew about each other. It's a story that's been published before, but we've never told it as part of the royal histories of the palaces that HRP cares for until now.

HOW DID YOU BEGIN IN THIS FIELD?

I'm an art and design historian by training. About a decade ago, I started to realise that the artists I was researching the 20th century British Neo-Romantics – were mostly gay men.

Matthew Storey has uncovered a treasure trove of forgotten LGBT+ history in HRP's palaces and collections

The only way to understand their artistic circle was to understand the gay subculture they were part of. I got involved in my museum's LGBTQ Working Group to pursue this idea, and it took off from there. I'm endlessly fascinated by seeing how LGBT+ people have lived in every human society and how they managed to thrive, despite often being denied and erased. It's personal too: it's the story of my own community, and I want to use my role as curator to share that history. I'm lucky to work for Historic Royal Palaces, an accredited Independent Research Organisation. We're committed to telling truly representative and inclusive stories, so there's huge support.

WHAT REACTIONS HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR FIELD OF HISTORY?

Every curator needs a specialism, but I've never wanted to focus on just one historic period or type of object when so much out there is interesting. LGBT+ history allows me to look at different time periods, people and places. People now come to me as an expert in the field, and it's very flattering to be asked for advice or to speak at conferences. A lot of my work is public facing, and the response has been great there, too. This is a history people want to know about, and we get great feedback from our LGBT+ events. While you can't please everyone, especially on social media, overall the reactions are very positive.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST EVENT IN LGBT+ HISTORY?

The 2017 celebration for the 50th anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act was huge. The 1967 act partially decriminalised homosexual acts between men itself a watershed moment for LGBT+ history. The celebrations were marked by museums and heritage sites across the country, including Historic Royal Palaces. I'd been advocating LGBT+ histories for years, but suddenly everybody realised it was important to put these stories front and centre as part of a major national anniversary. There were so many special events, exhibitions, publications and conferences I couldn't keep up! Its legacy is that the sector understands that it's important to tell these stories, and curators have searched for them in their histories and collections. The challenge now is to keep up the momentum and work out how we can build on our successes.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT LGBT+ STORIES FROM HISTORY ARE TOLD?

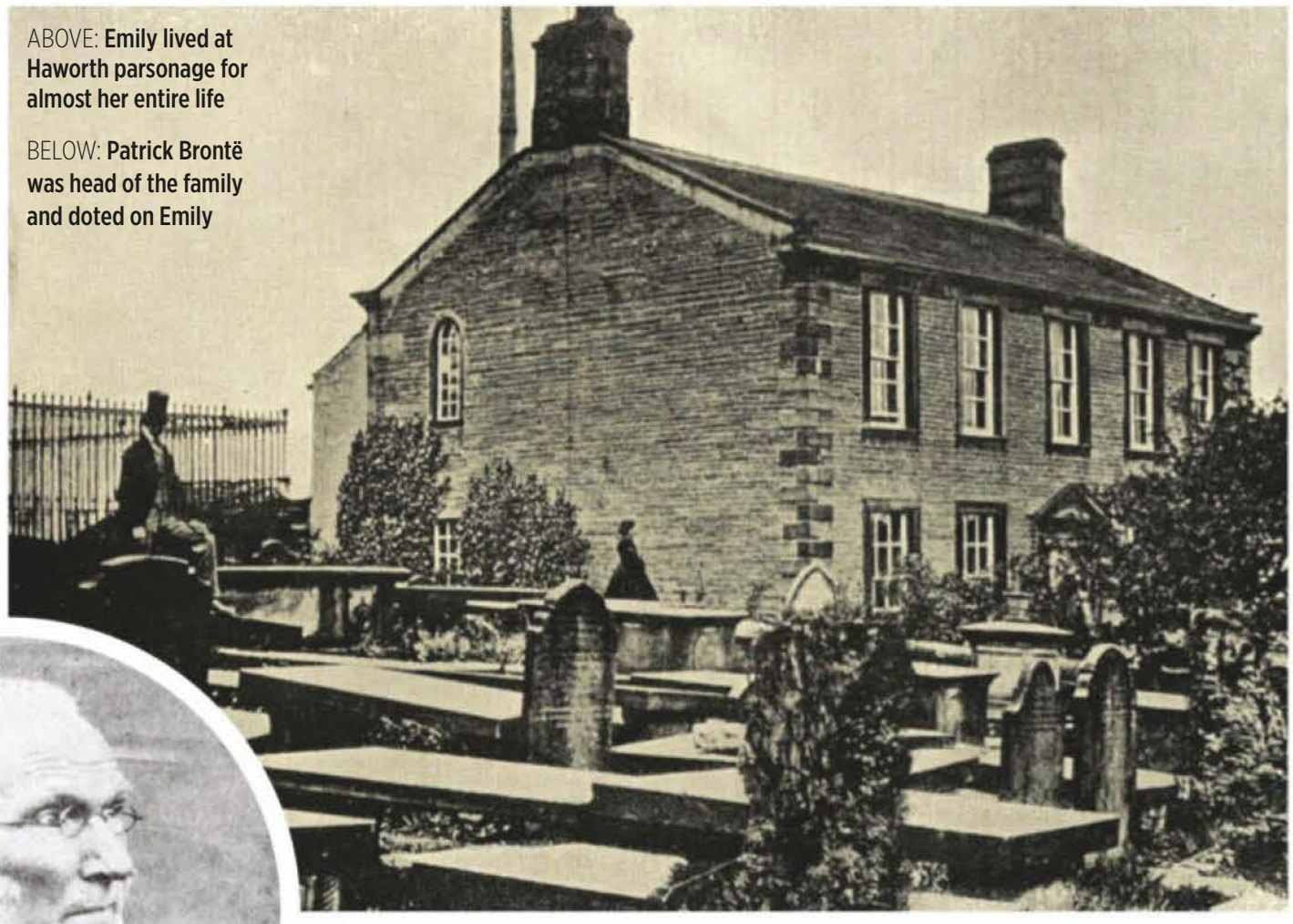
People need to know their heritage to have a sense of belonging. So many LGBT+ people face exclusion and rejection every day, and it's important to show them that they belong. There's a great film from 1996 called *The Watermelon Woman* by Cheryl Dunye it looks like a documentary, but it's actually a fictional account about Dunye discovering the life of a black lesbian actress from the 1930s. It was the first feature film made by a black lesbian woman, and it's helped me understand how important it is for people to be able to find others who looked and felt like them in the past. If we ignore the lives of LGBT+ people in history, we're only ever going to get part of the picture. To properly understand the past, we have to understand the lives of everybody who has come before us, not just those people who looked and acted in a certain way. There's now an understanding that we need to know more about the people in history whose voices have been silenced, and this can transform the lives of people living today.

MATTHEW STOREY is Collections Curator at Historic Royal Palaces. *hrp.org.uk*

Emily Brontë is born

On 30 July 1818, in the Yorkshire village of Thornton, a baby's cries cut through the air. Emily Brontë had just come into the world, the fifth child of Irish priest Patrick Brontë and his wife, Maria Branwell. But as Maria held the newborn for the first time, she could never have dreamed of the impact this child and her sisters would have on literature, with the world voraciously consuming their work for centuries to come.

Emily's younger sister, Anne, was born on 17 January 1820 200 years ago this year. Three months after her birth, the family moved to Haworth a bleak Yorkshire town on the cusp of industrialisation, with newly built mills churning the water of the River Worth, and encircled by a wild expanse of moorland. The family inhabited Haworth's parsonage, built from dark coloured brick and offering views of the local graveyard. The next year, the building was blighted by tragedy: the girls' mother, Maria, passed away on 15 September 1821, when Emily was just three.



ABOVE: **Emily lived at Haworth parsonage for almost her entire life**

BELOW: **Patrick Brontë was head of the family and doted on Emily**

Emily was largely educated at home, but she briefly attended school when she was almost six, joining her elder sisters (Maria, Elizabeth and Charlotte) at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge which Charlotte later immortalised in *Jane Eyre* as Lowood School.

But Cowan Bridge's admission register doesn't note any of the genius later attributed to Emily. It simply reads: "Emily Brontë. Entered Nov 25, 1824. Aged 5¾. Reads very prettily and works a little. Left school June 1, 1825. Subsequent career, governess".

Emily's departure was the result of a typhoid epidemic that ravaged the school and sent shockwaves through the Brontë family. Sent home suffering from tuberculosis, young Maria died from the disease on 6 May, and Elizabeth succumbed on 15 June. Patrick didn't send his surviving daughters back to the institution, so Emily was home schooled (excepting a stint at Roe Head School in 1835, which homesickness cut short).

CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

Perhaps owing to her limited time in a formal classroom, Emily struggled to grasp the intricacies of spelling: her few surviving original written materials are riddled with mistakes. She was, nonetheless, always an enthusiastic learner, educating herself from a range of fictional and non fictional sources at her disposal in the family home. She did so even when baking bread in the parsonage and could often be seen with a book propped open and a notepad at her side.

However, she did display an for creative pursuits with writing, of course, chief among them. Her imagination was vivid even as a child, when she and her siblings shared stories based on her brother Patrick Branwell Brontë's motley collection of toy soldiers.

Emily was naturally gifted at art and music, too, with a particular penchant for piano according to family friend Ellen Nussey, she played the instrument "with precision and brilliancy". It's likely, therefore, that her love of music accounts for the appearance of the "fifteen strong" Gimmerton band in *Wuthering Heights* that included "a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers".

As well as her creative pursuits, Emily kept herself occupied at the parsonage with her animals. Her bullmastiff, Keeper, accompanied her for daily walks on the moors, and the pair could often be seen lying beside each other on a rug while Emily read, one arm flung over his neck. She was also known to rescue injured ▶

GETTY IMAGES X2, BRIDGEMAN IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

DID YOU KNOW?

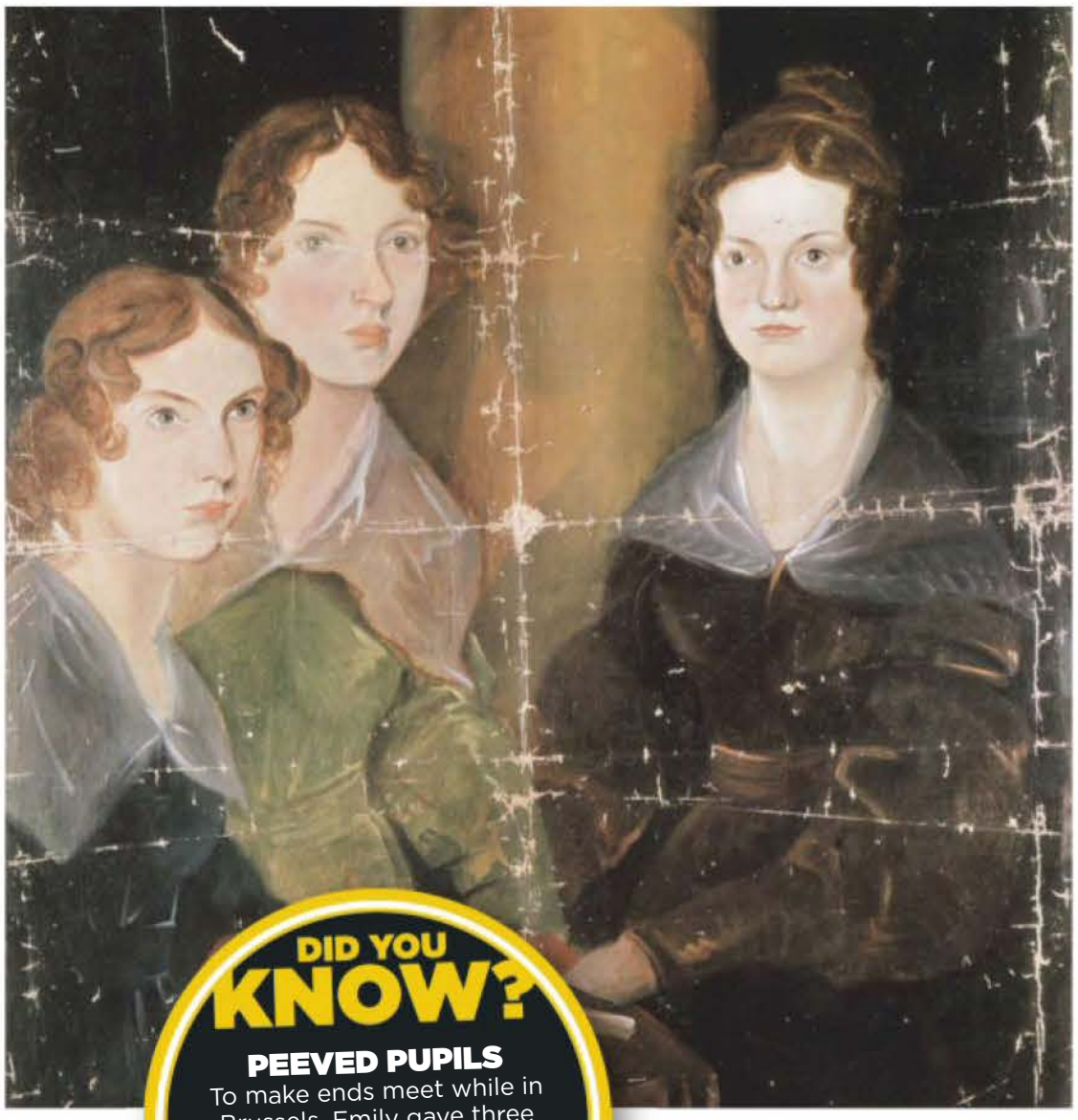
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The family name was originally 'Brunty', but Patrick assumed 'Brontë' (meaning thunder in Greek) while studying at the University of Cambridge – potentially as a nod to Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronté

ABOVE: **Emily was besotted with her bullmastiff, Keeper, and created this likeness with pencil and watercolour**

MAIN: **This portrait of Emily (c1833) was painted by her only brother, Patrick Branwell Brontë**

"Her imagination was vivid even as a child, when she and her siblings shared stories based on Patrick Branwell Brontë's toy soldiers"



DID YOU KNOW?

PEEVED PUPILS

To make ends meet while in Brussels, Emily gave three girls piano lessons – but only when they'd finished their regular classes. This tactic brought her students to tears, as piano ate into their playtime

ABOVE: **Patrick Branwell Brontë's painting of his sisters Anne (*left*), Emily (*centre*) and Charlotte (*right*)**

BELOW: **Haworth parsonage is now the Brontë Parsonage Museum, dedicated to Emily and her sisters**

animals during her walks on the moors, including the diminutive Nero, a merlin hawk that she recovered from an abandoned nest and brought home.

Emily set out from the safety of Haworth and her animals once more in 1838, when she became a teacher at Miss Patchett's Ladies Academy near Halifax. However, she was gripped by homesickness again and returned to her childhood home only six months after taking up the position.

Several years later, Emily ventured even further afield this time with Charlotte in tow. In 1842, the pair travelled to Brussels to enrol at the Pensionnat Héger (an 'Educational Establishment for Young Ladies') to polish their education and language skills. They were taught by Monsieur Constantin Héger, with whom Charlotte became somewhat infatuated.

Héger and Emily were often at odds, however, as she disliked his teaching methods (such as asking the sisters to compose essays on topics of his choosing). But after Emily died, Héger spoke fondly of her, saying he'd seen "the genius" in her writings. He preserved some of Emily's work, too a number of which exist in their translated form in

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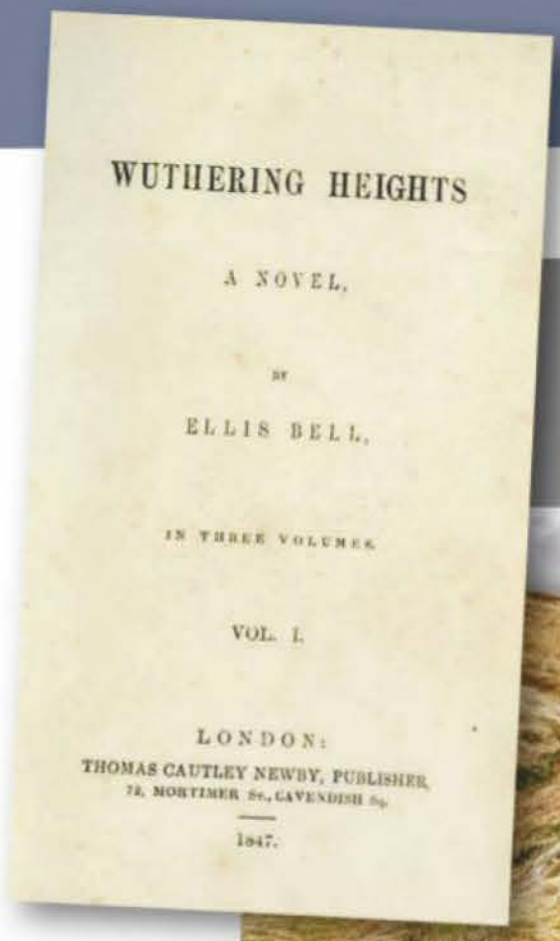

LEFT: The title page from the first edition of Emily's only novel, *Wuthering Heights*

BELOW: The remains of Top Withens, the ramshackle farmhouse linked to *Wuthering Heights*

scholarly studies on the talented siblings.

Emily returned to her native England in the autumn of 1842 and settled back into life at the parsonage. During the 1840s, she began assisting her father with a ritual that differed wildly from sketching or penning poetry – one that required the use of a pistol. Every day, Patrick would let off a shot from a top floor window in the parsonage, a habit he had developed as a preventative measure against civil unrest by Luddites (a group which had rioted against technology replacing skilled craftsmen in the early 19th century). When his eyesight began to fail, Patrick gave Emily the responsibility because, as the Haworth stationer John Greenwood stated in his diary, Patrick "had such unbounded confidence in his daughter Emily, knowing, as he did, her unparalleled intrepidity and firmness".

Emily would run to the bottom of the garden, put the target board in position and then return to her father, who had primed and loaded the gun for her. One day, after she had fired the weapon, Patrick described his daughter as "a brave and noble girl. She is my right-hand, nay the very apple of my eye!"

LITERATURE LOVER

When she wasn't wielding a pistol, Emily yearned to make her mark on the world of literature. Despite the fact that Emily is best known for her only novel – *Wuthering Heights* – much of her creative energy was channelled into the construction of Gondal: a sprawling imaginary island located in the Pacific Ocean that was led by women.

Emily worked on this fantasy land with her younger sister, Anne, and the two wrote elaborate narrative poems that described Gondal's dynastic family sagas and political battles. A character named Augusta Geraldine Almeida (known in the poems as A.G.A.) appears to have been Emily's main protagonist – a passionate beauty who was utterly ruthless in personal and political affairs.

Sadly, no full account of the fantasy epic survives, but Emily's published poems – those released in 1846 in *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (the siblings' pseudonyms) are based on Emily's Gondal writings. In fact, Emily carefully 'de Gondalised' the poems, as one biographer termed it, for publication, scrubbing out all traces of Gondal so that they stood alone as poetic verse.

> "Much of her creative energy was channelled into the construction of Gondal: a sprawling imaginary island"

However, the aforementioned poetry collection the sisters' first publication was not a commercial success, selling very few copies. Yet the women were determined to forge successful literary careers so that they could financially support themselves in the event of their father's death. Buoyed by a handful of reviews that acknowledged their literary skill (reviews in which Emily's poetry was regularly singled out for praise), they pressed ahead with their first novels.

Emily's narrative was, of course, *Wuthering Heights*: a Gothic tale that follows the tangled and ultimately doomed love between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. It was published in December 1847 by Thomas Cautley Newby and appeared as a double volume alongside Anne's *Agnes Grey*. Although maligned by critics upon its release, *Wuthering Heights* is consistently among the best-selling classic novels in the English language.

Emily seemed to have been writing a second novel, too – at least, this is the impression given by a letter from Newby, which was found in Emily's writing bureau long after she died. The note, dated 15 February 1848, says "[Newby] shall have great pleasure in making arrangements for your next novel". He then urged the author to take their time writing it, offering this warning: "If it be an improvement on your first novel, you will have established yourself as a first-rate novelist, but if it fall short, the critics will be too apt to say that you have expended your talent in your first novel."

Sadly, these plans never came to pass. Emily's health declined in September 1848, and following a short struggle with tuberculosis, she died on 19 December.

Despite Newby's letter, no evidence of a manuscript for a second novel has ever been found – although many have speculated that Charlotte may have destroyed it, and many of Emily's other materials, after her sister's death. *Wuthering Heights*, it seems, is the final testament to Emily's first-rate ability to spin passionate tales, infused with the wildness of the Yorkshire moors.

BBC SOUNDS

Listen to an adaptation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* on BBC Sounds.
bbc.co.uk/sounds/series/p07lbzsq

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The Falklands War

Commandos from 40 Commando Anti-Tank Troop march towards Stanley during the Falklands War

WHEN WAS THE CONFLICT, AND WHERE DID IT TAKE PLACE?

The Falklands War saw Britain and Argentina battle for control of the Falkland Islands a tiny archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean made up of two main islands (dubbed East Falkland and West Falkland) and around 776 smaller outcrops between 2 April and 14 June 1982.

WHAT SPARKED THE WAR?

On 2 April, Argentina invaded and occupied the British dependent territory of the Falkland Islands, and they took the neighbouring island of South Georgia the following day. Interestingly, however, neither Britain nor Argentina declared a state of war at any point, meaning the conflict remained, officially, an 'undeclared war'.

WHAT LED ARGENTINA TO LAUNCH THE INVASION?

From an Argentine point of view, the war was sparked less by an 'invasion' and more by a reclamation of territory that was, by rights, theirs. The history of the Falklands is rather convoluted. France was the first nation to establish a colony on East Falkland in 1764, before the British claimed West Falkland as its own the next year. Five years after that, Spanish troops captured the fort of Port Egmont (Britain's first settlement on West Falkland).

Fifty years on, a mercenary working for the United Provinces of the River Plate a forerunner of what would later become Argentina claimed possession of the islands. In 1833, the British reasserted their sovereignty and requested that the Argentine administration leave.

DID YOU KNOW?

LOST AT SEA

The Falkland Islands were so remote that some British service personnel recall assuming that they were located somewhere off the coast of Scotland.

Britain retained possession of the Falklands from that point on but the issue of the islands' sovereignty remained controversial.

WHY DID THIS BECOME SO IMPORTANT IN 1982?

In the early 1980s, Argentina was ruled by a military dictatorship called a junta and rocked by political unrest and economic crises. Its leadership believed that reclaiming the Falklands the islands were about 300 miles off Argentina's coastline, but over 8,000 miles from Britain's shores would appeal to nationalist sentiment and unite an increasingly fractious public behind the government. And the fact that the 150th anniversary of the 1833 British claim to sovereignty was approaching which Argentina

GETTY IMAGES

regarded as illegal meant that speed was of the essence.

DID BRITAIN HAVE ANY IDEA OF WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN?

If time was ticking for Argentina's military leaders, the British had, in a sense, been attempting to run down the clock on the issue of the Falklands. In 1965, the United Nations had requested that the two nations reach some kind of agreement about the disputed sovereignty. And three years later, Britain made a commitment to the islanders that they would have the last word on the matter. Yet the people of the Falklands refused to consider Argentinian sovereignty, meaning that the British government was placed in an awkward position.

In March 1982, the mistrust on both sides bubbled over and, on 2 April, Argentine forces landed at the islands' capital, Stanley, before going on to invade the nearby island of South Georgia. By the end of the month, at least 10,000 Argentine troops were stationed in the Falkland Islands.

HOW DID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT RESPOND?

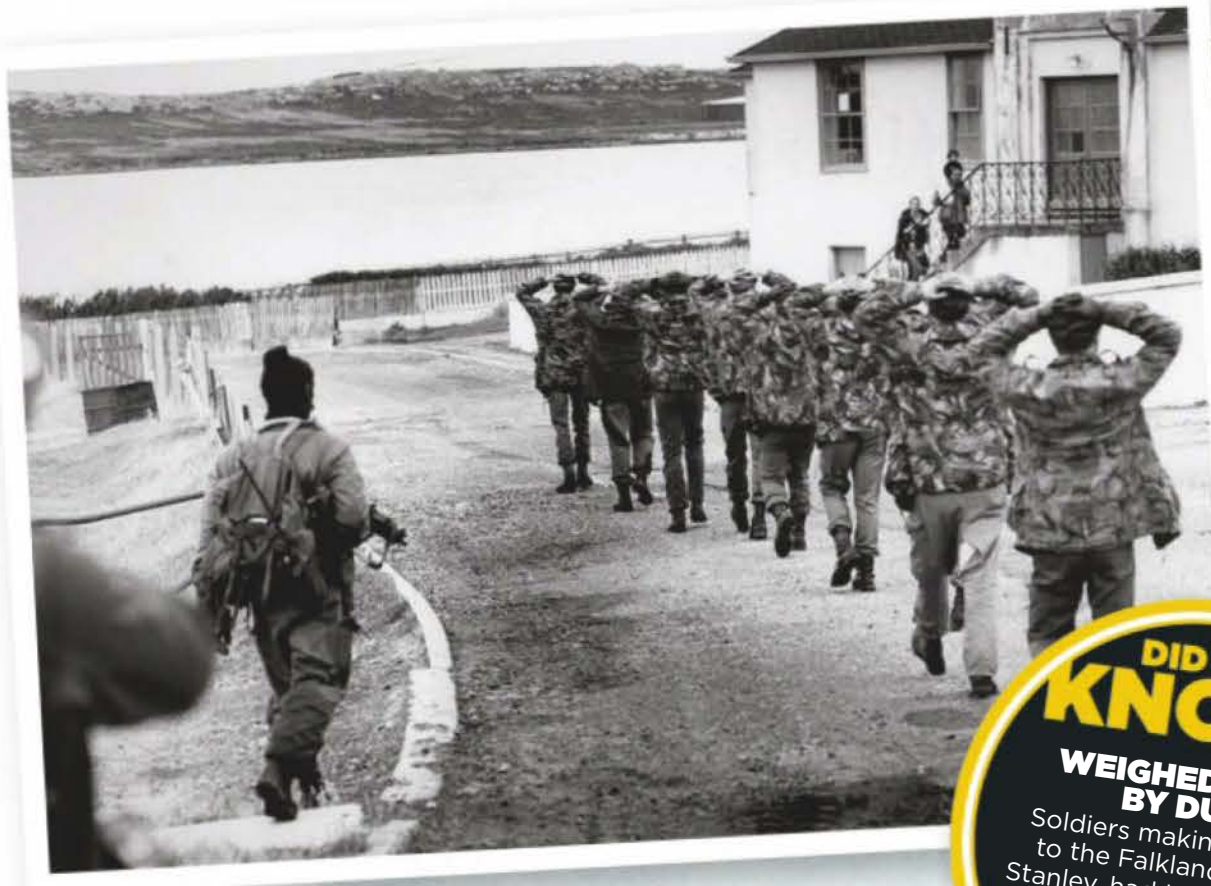
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared an exclusion zone of 200 miles around the islands, and the British government set up a war cabinet to manage the crisis. A naval fleet dubbed the British Task Force that eventually included 127 ships was gradually assembled, starting with two dedicated aircraft carriers and two cruise ships redeployed for that purpose.

WHAT WAS THE FIRST MAJOR ENGAGEMENT OF THE CONFLICT?

A Commando unit, SAS troops and members of the Special Boat Squadron retook South Georgia on 25 April. Yet it was the sinking of the Argentine cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* by British forces on 2 May that has been remembered as the conflict's first major engagement and it proved to be one of the most controversial acts of the war. Despite being discovered by the submarine HMS *Conqueror* outside of the exclusion zone, the decision was made to torpedo the cruiser leading to the loss of 323 Argentinian lives.

HOW DID ARGENTINA RETALIATE?

Two days later, Argentine forces launched a missile strike against a British destroyer, the HMS *Sheffield*, which caused massive damage. Twenty crew members were killed and another 24 injured, and the burning ruins of the vessel finally sank on 10 May. HMS *Sheffield* became the first Royal Navy ship to be sunk in action since the end of World War II. Several other British ships were also sunk during the course of the Falklands War, including HMS *Ardent*, HMS *Antelope* and SS *Atlantic Conveyor*.



DID YOU KNOW?

WEIGHED DOWN BY DUTY

Soldiers making their way to the Falklands' capital, Stanley, had to contend with bad weather and boggy terrain – all with 55kg (120lb) packs on their backs.

ABOVE: **British soldiers stationed on the Falklands surrender to the Argentine troops who invaded on 2 April 1982**

RIGHT: **The sinking of the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* remains one of the war's definitive (and controversial) moments**

A survivor from the HMS *Sheffield*, targeted by the Argentinians in the wake of the *General Belgrano*'s sinking, is taken for treatment

GETTY IMAGES X2, SHUTTERSTOCK X1

LEFT: **One South American newspaper branded Margaret Thatcher a pirate (and worse), complete with eyepatch**

BELOW: **Argentine reservists sing the national anthem during the Falklands war; though the invasion arguably stoked up patriotism, it ultimately led to the end of Argentina's military dictatorship**

Welsh veteran Simon Weston suffered severe burns over 46 per cent of his body during the war

WHAT WAS THE REACTION TO THE WAR, BOTH IN BRITAIN AND ARGENTINA?

The decision to go to war was met with a positive reaction in Argentina, with crowds gathering outside the presidential palace to show their support. The state-monitored press helped stoke the patriotic atmosphere – one particularly striking front page depicted Margaret Thatcher sporting an eyepatch, with the headline "Pirate, witch and murderer: guilty!" The British press did their bit to stir up national sentiment, too, and *The Sun*'s headline in response to the sinking of the *General Belgrano* – "Gotcha" – remains one of the newspaper's most famous (or infamous) front pages.

WAS IT PURELY A NAVAL CONFLICT?

No – it was also fought on land and in the skies, notably after British commandos came ashore at Port San Carlos on the northwest coast of East Falkland on 21 May. Despite being known by British forces as 'bomb alley', due to repeated attacks by Argentine aircraft, the initial landing faced no resistance. This wasn't to last, though, and over the following days British ships faced an aerial onslaught before they managed to move men and equipment on to land.

WHAT WERE THE KEY LAND BATTLES?

Before reclaiming the Falklands' capital, Stanley, British forces first headed southward to capture the East Falkland settlements of Darwin and Goose Green. Weather conditions were poor, and the ensuing battle, in late May, lasted a day and a night – some of it fought hand to hand. Although the British troops were hugely outnumbered, they were eventually successful and began the long slog east through peat bogs towards the capital.

WHAT HAPPENED AT STANLEY?

By 12 June 1982, British forces had reached high ground around the capital and surrounded and blockaded its port. A series of short battles ensued, but it was clear that the town was cut off. Argentina surrendered on 14 June – after 74 days, the war had ended. British rule was restored later that year.

HOW MANY PEOPLE LOST THEIR LIVES OR WERE INJURED?

The Falklands War left 650 Argentinian and 255 British people dead. Hundreds more were injured on both sides – the burns suffered by troops such as Simon Weston (a Welsh guardsman serving aboard the RFA *Sir Galahad* who was left with burns over 46 per cent of his body when his ship was bombed) became some of the most recognisable images of the conflict. Britain also captured around 11,000 Argentine prisoners, all of whom were freed when the fighting finished.

> "Britain captured around 11,000 Argentine prisoners, all of whom were freed when the fighting finished"

WHAT ABOUT THE POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS IN BRITAIN?

The conflict had received widespread popular support in Britain, possibly because the opening years of the 1980s had been characterised by bad news: economic recession, decline in industry, and – arguably – declining influence on the world stage. But the victory became a defining moment in Margaret Thatcher's tenure. As she put it in a speech in Cheltenham: "We have ceased to be a nation in retreat … we rejoice that Britain has rekindled that spirit which has fired her for generations past and which today has begun to burn as brightly as before." It was a victory that was to translate into personal success for Thatcher: in the general election of the next year, her Conservative government won by the most decisive landslide since 1945.

WHAT HAPPENED IN ARGENTINA?

The defeat was hugely damaging for Argentina's military leadership, and civilian rule was reinstated in 1983 following the first free elections in a decade.

DID THE CONFLICT RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY?

In a word: no. Although the two nations re-established relations in a joint statement in 1989, Argentina still maintains its claim to the Falklands islands, even adding it to its constitution in 1994. In a 2013 referendum, all but three islanders voted to remain a UK overseas territory – a result dismissed by the Argentine government as a "publicity stunt". The issue, it seems, looks set to rumble quietly on.

BBC WORLD SERVICE

Listen to an Argentine soldier's account of invading the Falkland Islands in 1982 on an episode of *Witness History* on the BBC World Service. *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00q87x9*

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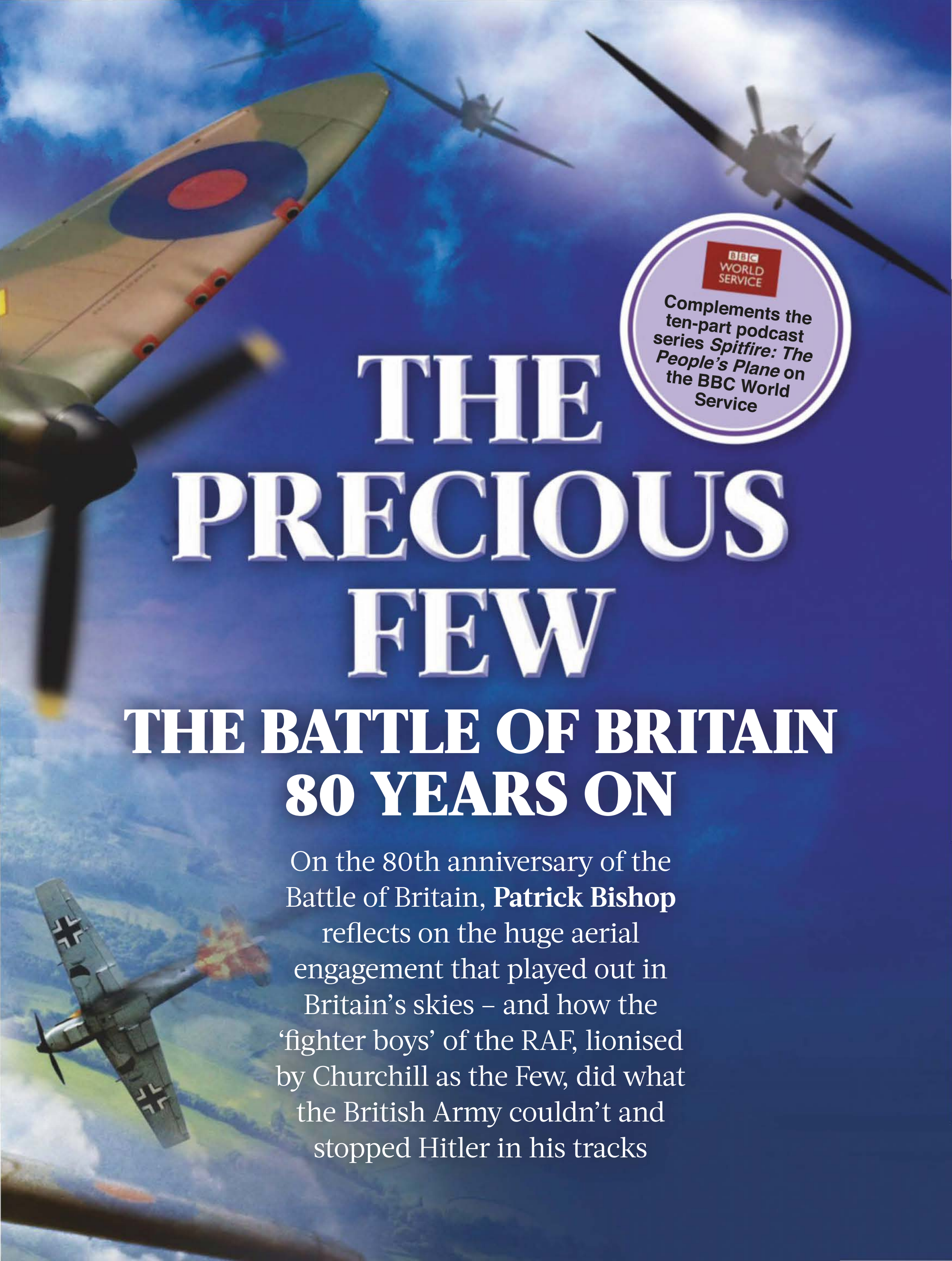


BBC WORLD SERVICE

Complements the ten-part podcast series *Spitfire: The People's Plane* on the BBC World Service

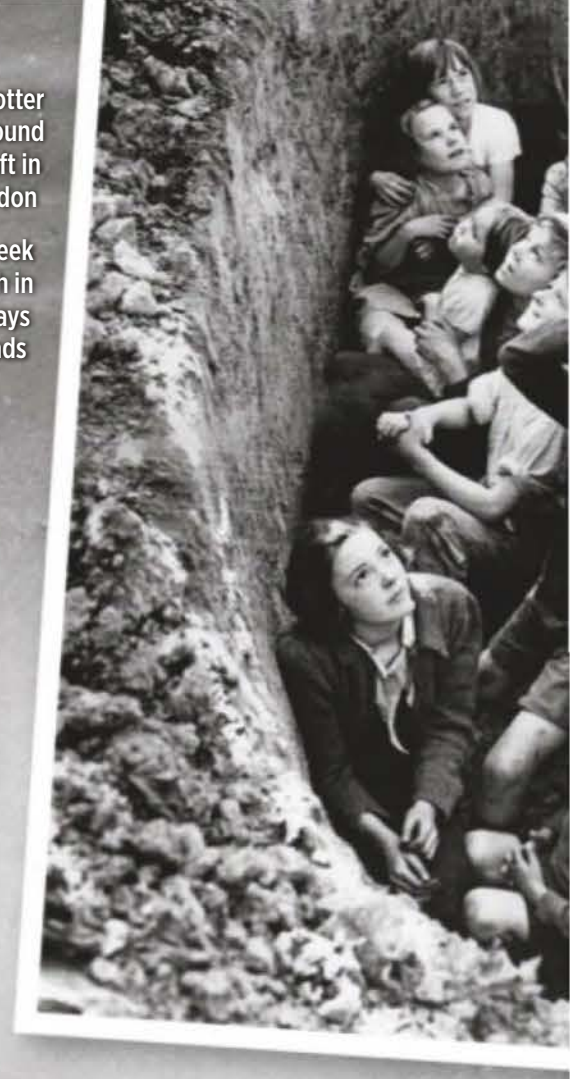
THE PRECIOUS FEW

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN 80 YEARS ON

On the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, **Patrick Bishop** reflects on the huge aerial engagement that played out in Britain's skies – and how the 'fighter boys' of the RAF, lionised by Churchill as the Few, did what the British Army couldn't and stopped Hitler in his tracks

MAIN: **An aircraft spotter keeps watch for inbound German aircraft in central London**

RIGHT: **Children seek shelter in a trench in Kent as a dogfight plays out above their heads**



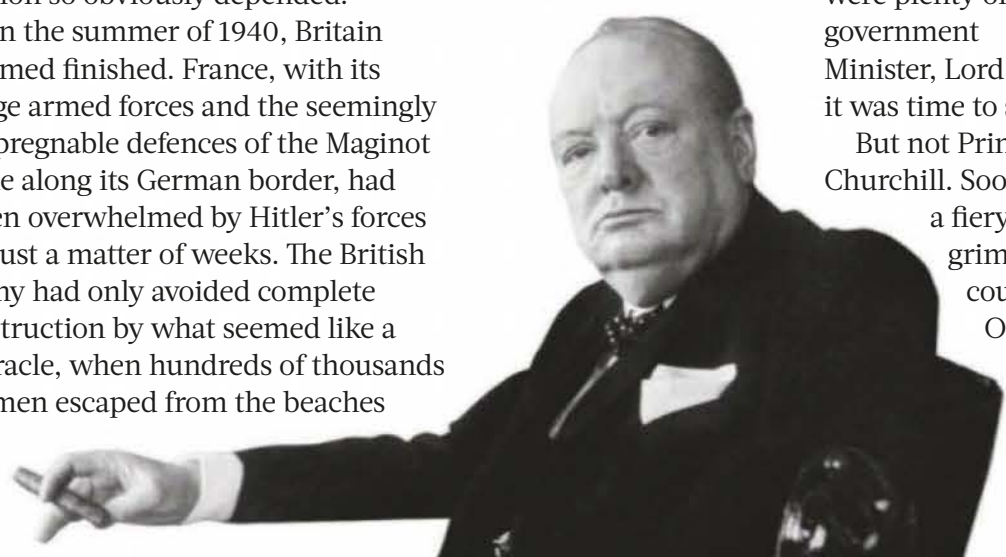
Eighty summers ago, the inhabitants of the Home Counties witnessed something the world had never seen before and never would again. Day after day, above their heads, air armies waged a gigantic battle – one that would have a decisive effect on the outcome of World War II.

For the first time in British history, a life-or-death struggle was fought out in view of large numbers of the nation's citizens. The combat took place over the stalwarts of everyday life – above houses, streets and fields. Those below had only to look up to see an amazing sight: huge flocks of German bombers and escorts crawling across the sky while the RAF's fighters swirled around them, scribbling chalky condensation trails in the blue and stitching it with the gold and red of tracer ammunition and cannon.

The British people watched with a mixture of fear and excitement and, above all, admiration for the pilots upon whose skill and bravery the fate of the nation so obviously depended.

In the summer of 1940, Britain seemed finished. France, with its huge armed forces and the seemingly impregnable defences of the Maginot Line along its German border, had been overwhelmed by Hitler's forces in just a matter of weeks. The British army had only avoided complete destruction by what seemed like a miracle, when hundreds of thousands of men escaped from the beaches of Dunkirk. The Germans thought they were invincible. Hitler was convinced that, having seen what had happened to first Poland, then Belgium, Holland and France, the British would soon come to their senses and make peace. And there were plenty of people in Britain's government – including the Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax – who believed it was time to start negotiations.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill saw the nation through the Battle of Britain



But not Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Soon after Dunkirk, he made a fiery speech laying out the grim situation facing the country: Britain *had* to fight. Otherwise it, along with Europe, would "sink into the abyss of a new

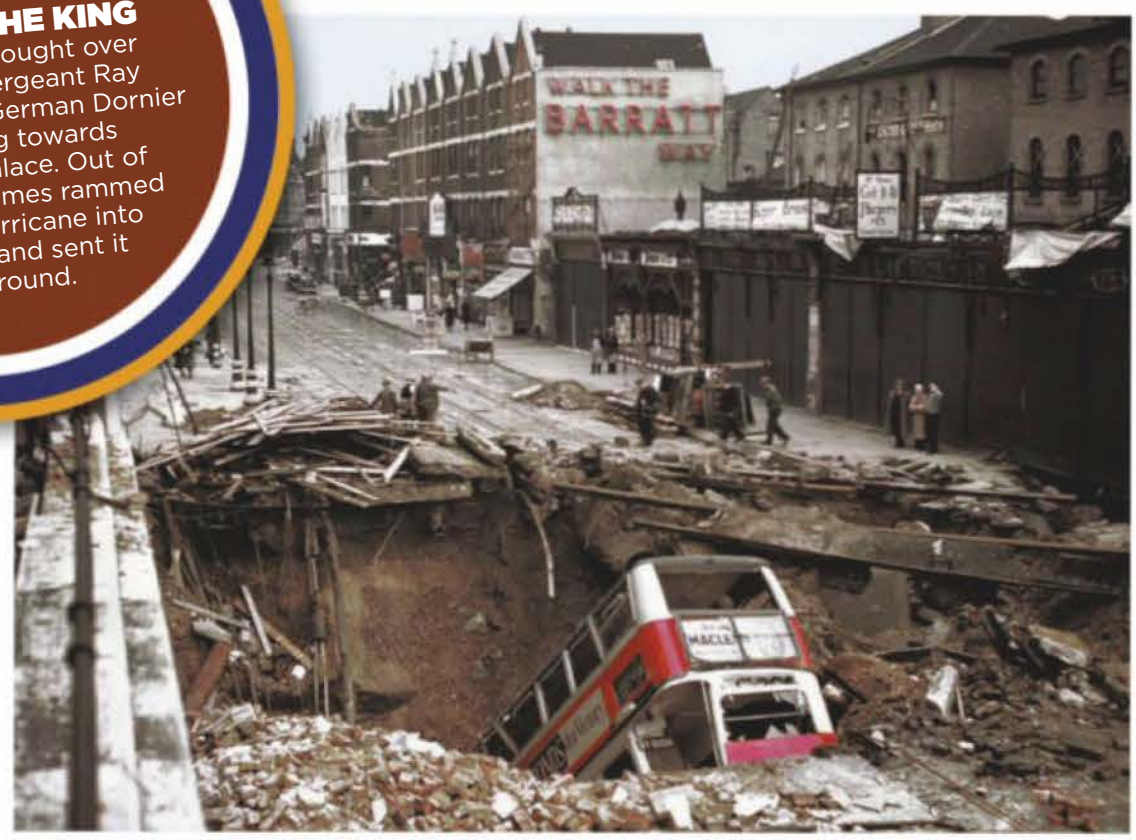
GETTY IMAGES X6

German Heinkel HE-111 bombers fly over Britain during a mission in September 1940

DID YOU KNOW?

GOD SAVE THE KING

During a sortie fought over London, RAF Sergeant Ray Holmes noticed a German Dornier bomber flying towards Buckingham Palace. Out of ammunition, Holmes rammed his Hawker Hurricane into the bomber and sent it to the ground.



ABOVE: **The first mass air raid on London caused fires across the city's docks**

RIGHT: **Following a night of heavy bombing on Balham, London, a double-decker bus fell into a bomb crater. The raid also damaged a tube station**

Dark Age". The Battle of France was over, he told the nation, before proclaiming: "The Battle of Britain is about to begin." These were chilling words. But instead of cowing his listeners, it created a mood of stubborn determination. Most of all, it inspired the small band of airmen who would determine whether Britain fell.

HITLER'S GAMBIT

Hitler had not yet made a serious plan to invade Britain. He didn't think he would have to. If the British government was stupid enough not to sue for peace, then it would not take long for the German air force to persuade them. The Luftwaffe was strong and drunk on victory. The Germans believed that the Royal Air Force would be no match for them.

"The Luftwaffe was strong and drunk on victory"

In this they were very much mistaken. Although very little money had been spent on the British military between the world wars, the lion's share had gone to the RAF. Some far-sighted planners had ordered modern fighter aircraft – the famous Spitfire and Hurricane – to counter the German threat. They had also invested in the new technology of radar, so they could detect enemy aircraft and direct their fighters to intercept them.

Once Churchill had signalled defiance, the Luftwaffe offensive began. The battle played out in three main phases. In early July, the Germans attacked shipping in the Channel, trying to force the British fighter squadrons based along the coast of southeast England to come up and be chopped down by the supposedly superior Luftwaffe. When that didn't work, in mid-August they targeted the fighter airfields themselves. Having failed to knock them out, the Germans switched to bombing raids on London.

Continues on p32

This World War II-era poster gives an X-ray view of 'Britain's new Spitfire' plane

PASSIONATE PILOTS

The Spitfire was beloved by RAF pilots, with delivery pilot Joy Lofthouse saying: "One was always thrilled to fly a Spitfire ... it was the culmination of our flying experience". In fact, she described it as "almost like having wings oneself".

THE HOT SEAT

Before the Battle of Britain, the level cockpit was replaced by the now iconic curved bubble cockpit. To help ensure the pilots' safety, the Spitfire was kitted out with bulletproof windscreens, and armour plating was fitted behind the plane's engines.

WINGING IT

The Spitfire had an elliptical wing shape with a thin airfoil, which – coupled with its powerful Rolls Royce Merlin engine – made it respond excellently at high altitudes.

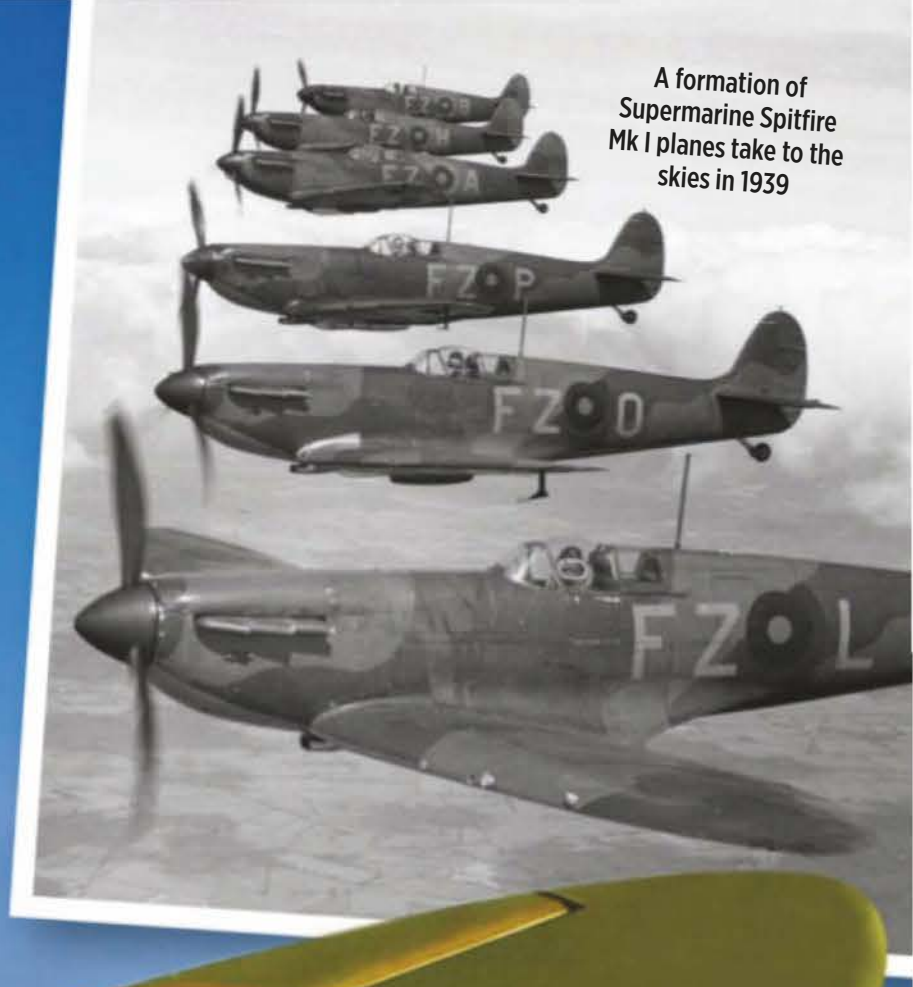
ALL FIRED UP

Why Spitfires became the nation's favourite flying machine

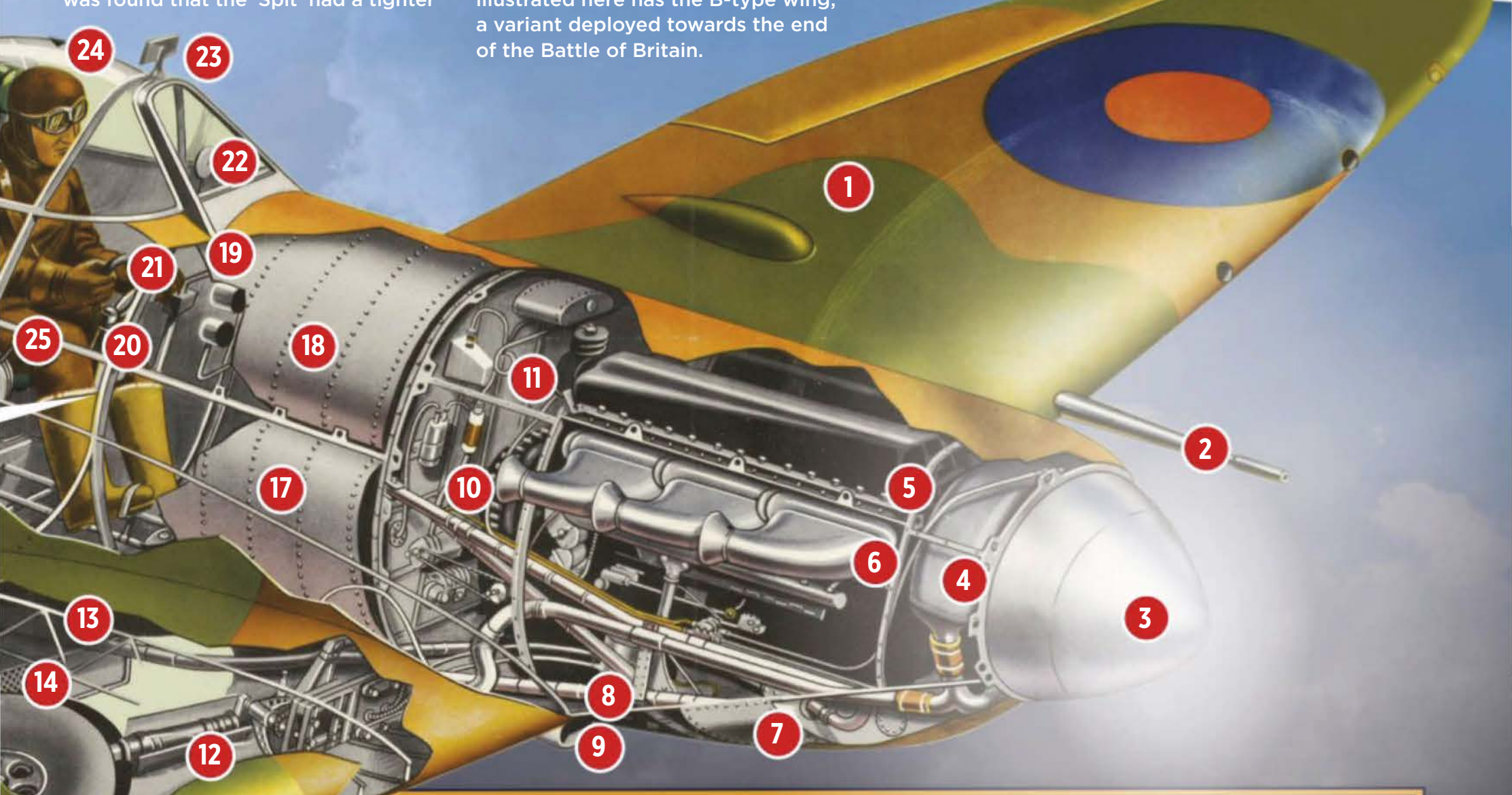
More Hurricanes than Spitfires flew in the Battle of Britain, but it was the Spitfire that won the hearts of the nation. With its narrow fuselage and elliptical wings, the Spitfire was beautiful as well as deadly, and it became a symbol of grace and defiance. The design emerged from the attempts of the Supermarine Company to produce a record-beating seaplane in the early 1930s. By 1936 it had evolved into a sleek, modern fighter, powered by a Rolls Royce Merlin engine and more than capable of holding its own against its Luftwaffe rival: the Messerschmitt Bf 109. When the two planes eventually clashed, it was found that the 'Spit' had a tighter turning circle than the 109 – a vital advantage in a 'dogfight', when each pilot is trying to get their guns on their enemy and shoot them down.

The RAF 'fighter boys' who flew the planes loved them. It was "the perfect flying machine", according to World War II flying ace George Unwin. "It was so sensitive on the controls. There was no heaving or pulling and pushing and kicking. You just breathed on it."

The Spitfire proved to be highly adaptable, capable of being upgraded as new technologies arrived. It was the only Allied aircraft to be in production from the beginning of the war to the end – and then beyond. The Spitfire illustrated here has the B-type wing; a variant deployed towards the end of the Battle of Britain.



A formation of Supermarine Spitfire Mk I planes take to the skies in 1939



Under the hood

How 'Britain's new spitfire' packed such a deadly punch

1 Metal-covered wings
2 Armaments
3 Three-bladed constant-speed air screw
4 Tank
5 Rolls-Royce Merlin engine
6 Exhausts
7 Oil tank
8 Engine bearers
9 Carburettor air intake
10 Supercharger
11 Fireproof bulkhead
12 Retracted undercarriage (starboard)
13 Metal ribs
14 Radiator
15 Machine guns
16 Aileron
17 Lower fuel tank
18 Upper fuel tank
19 Instrument panel
20 Control lever
21 Firing trigger
22 Gun sight
23 Mirror
24 Sliding hood
25 Undercarriage control handle
26 Longeron
27 Battery box
28 Parachute flare
29 Metal ribs
30 Ditty box
31 Stringer
32 Radio
33 Aerial
34 Fin
35 Rudder
36 Elevators
37 Tail wheel

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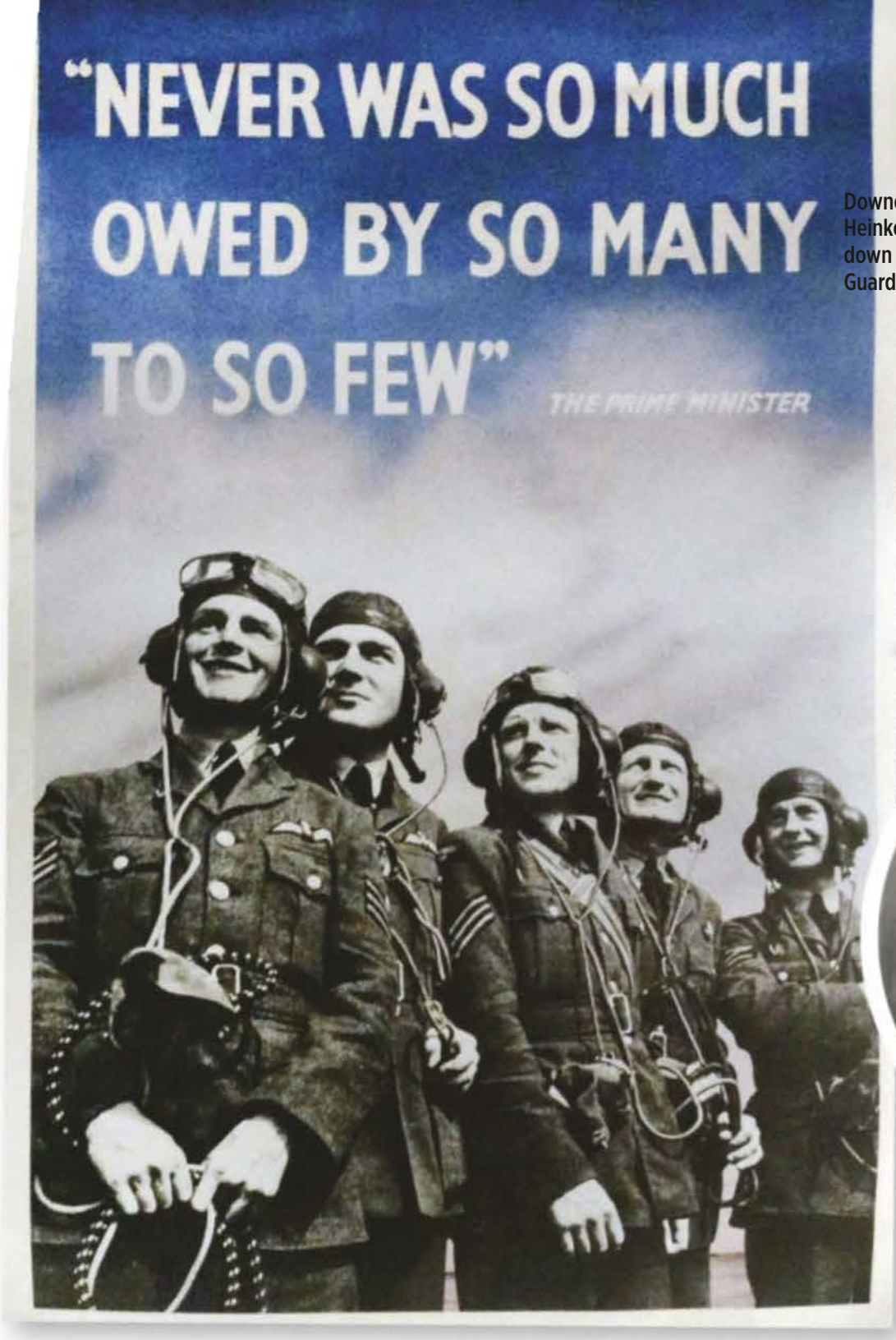

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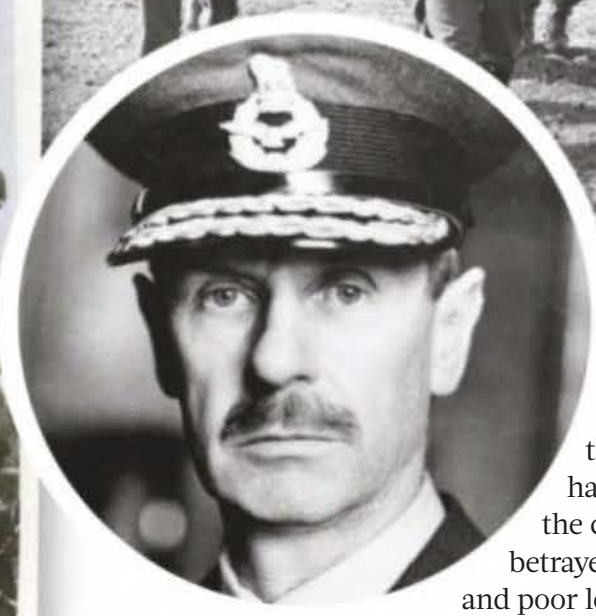
Downed German airmen whose Heinkel HE-111 bomber was shot down are escorted by the Home Guard in Goodwood, Sussex



ABOVE: **Head of Fighter Command Hugh Dowding, who helped secure victory**

ABOVE LEFT: **The fighter pilots, dubbed 'the Few' by Churchill, were celebrated in propaganda posters**

By mid September, it was clear they had failed Hitler would never win control of Britain's skies, nor invade its islands. This was the first time since the war began that the Germans had been beaten anywhere. It was a great moment, showing that the tide of the war could be turned by determination and skill. The battle was a victory for British technology in the shape of the Spitfire and Hurricane as well as radar and of the leadership provided by Churchill and the head of Fighter Command, Hugh Dowding. But above all, it was a triumph for the young men called 'the Few' by Churchill who flew the aircraft. They were the real stars of the Battle of Britain.

Credit for famous victories typically goes to commanders: Agincourt belonged to Henry V, Trafalgar to Horatio Nelson, and Waterloo to the Duke of Wellington. This time, though, the glory went to a small but very unusual group. Significantly, its members were not drawn exclusively from the upper classes. They came from every level of society and were, as proclaimed by the newspapers and radio of the time, "ordinary people doing extraordinary things".

"Pilots were, on average, only 20 years old – many still too young to vote"

In the summer of 1940, the pilots of Fighter Command were the nation's poster boys. People spoke of them as if they were their own sons. They were the 'fighter boys' a term that reflected the fact the pilots were, on average, only 20 years old. Many were still too young to vote. The media was fascinated by them, and the government was only too eager to play along, building up their image in lots of interviews and photo ops.

The young aviators played their part perfectly, conveying just the right mixture of boyish exuberance and strength of purpose. The coverage presented them as modern minded and competent. This was just as well, as the army's performance to date had created exactly the opposite impression. In Norway and France in the spring of 1940, defeat had followed defeat, and the courage of the troops was betrayed by shoddy equipment and poor leadership.

The army still believed that you had to be a gentlemen to be an officer. Those who had led soldiers into the war all belonged to the same military caste. They went to the same schools, boasted the same moustaches, and married one another's sisters. But the RAF was different. The technical nature of the service meant that the net had to be cast wider than the military's traditional recruiting base for officers and men alike.

THE SEARCH FOR NEW BLOOD

In 1936, when the war was still looming, the doors to the world of flying were thrown open. The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR) was formed to provide a pool of trained pilots to replace those who were expected to fall in the first phase of combat. The qualifications required were modest, and suddenly the dreams of a legion of lower middle class lads brought up on the adventures of the fictional fighter ace James 'Biggles' Bigglesworth came true, as they set off at weekends to learn to fly at government expense.

"I'd always wanted to fly, from when I was a small boy," remembered Charlton Haw, who left school at 14. "I never wanted to do anything else, but I never thought there would ever be a chance for me. Until the RAFVR was formed, for a normal schoolboy it was almost impossible." He joined up in York aged 18, went solo in half the average time and flew Hurricanes with No. 504 Squadron.

The reservists joined their squadrons as sergeant pilots, and as such they would make a vital contribution to victory. More than one third of the 2,946 men who flew in the Battle of Britain were non commissioned officers (NCOs). However, they were paid less, lived in poorer accommodation and enjoyed fewer privileges than their officer comrades.

Looking back from the standpoint of today, it seems unfair that men who fought and died together in the air should eat in different 'messes' on the ground, but in my conversations with survivors over the years, I rarely heard any complaints. "We were all very close," said Maurice Leng, who flew as a sergeant with No. 73 Squadron. "There was no sort of officers versus sergeants ballyhoo. We were all in the same boat, and there was marvellous camaraderie." By the later stages of the engagement, death and injury had done much to even things up. Almost every NCO pilot ended up with a commission, and the amateurs of the RAFVR soon proved they were the equal of the pre-war professionals.

'The Few' were bound together by a shared passion. They were drawn to the RAF because they were fascinated by flying still a glamorous and mysterious activity by a willingness to take risks, and an eagerness for fun and adventure.

While researching my various books on the Battle of Britain, I was struck again by how closely the popular image of 'the Few' matched the reality. "We were young and had great confidence in our abilities and in our planes, so we all, quite joyfully, joined in the absurd race to death and destruction," recalled Charles Fenwick, who flew with No. 610 Squadron.

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

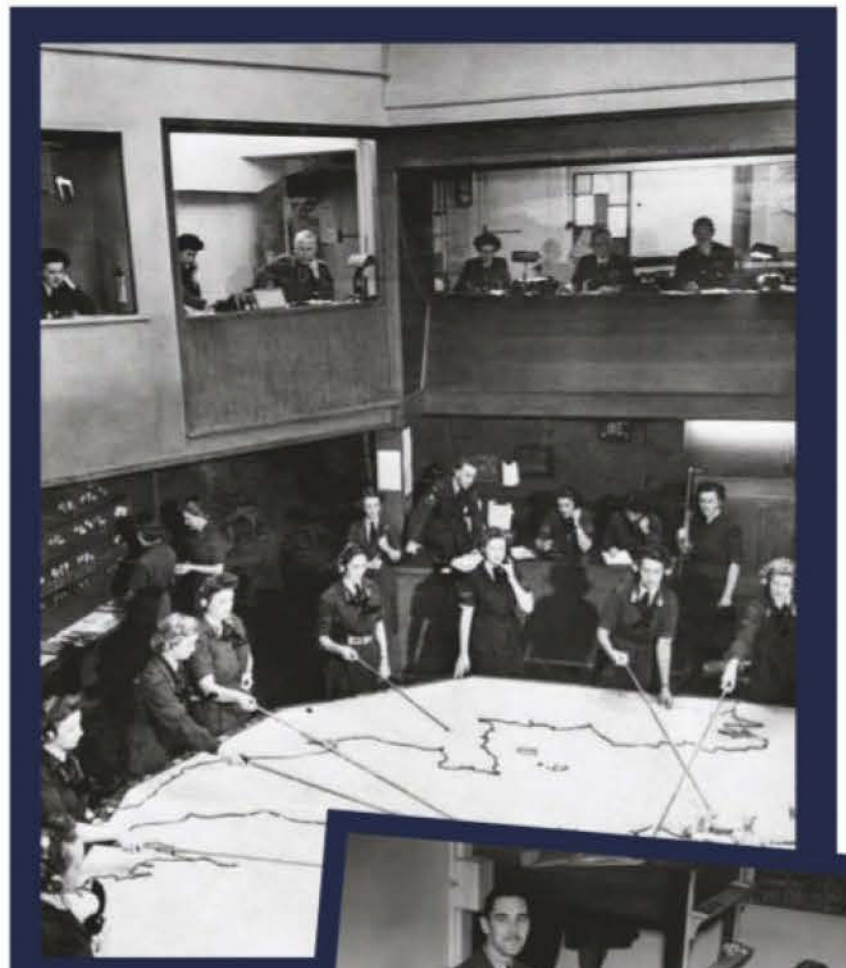
The pilots constructed their own reality in which the possibility of death, although ever present, was rarely mentioned. Off duty, life was lived to the full; who knew how much time was left?

At the end of a long day's fighting, pilots jumped into their jalopies and

Continues on p36

A huddle of eager RAF volunteer reserves listen to their training instructor in 1937

Two RAFVR air gunners polish their firing skills by shooting at targets at RAF Penrhos in Wales



ABOVE: **WAAF plotters and duty officers man the map tables at No. 10 Group Headquarters, RAF Rudloe Manor**

RIGHT: **WAAF telephone operators hard at work in Cambridgeshire**

MODERN MILITARY WOMEN

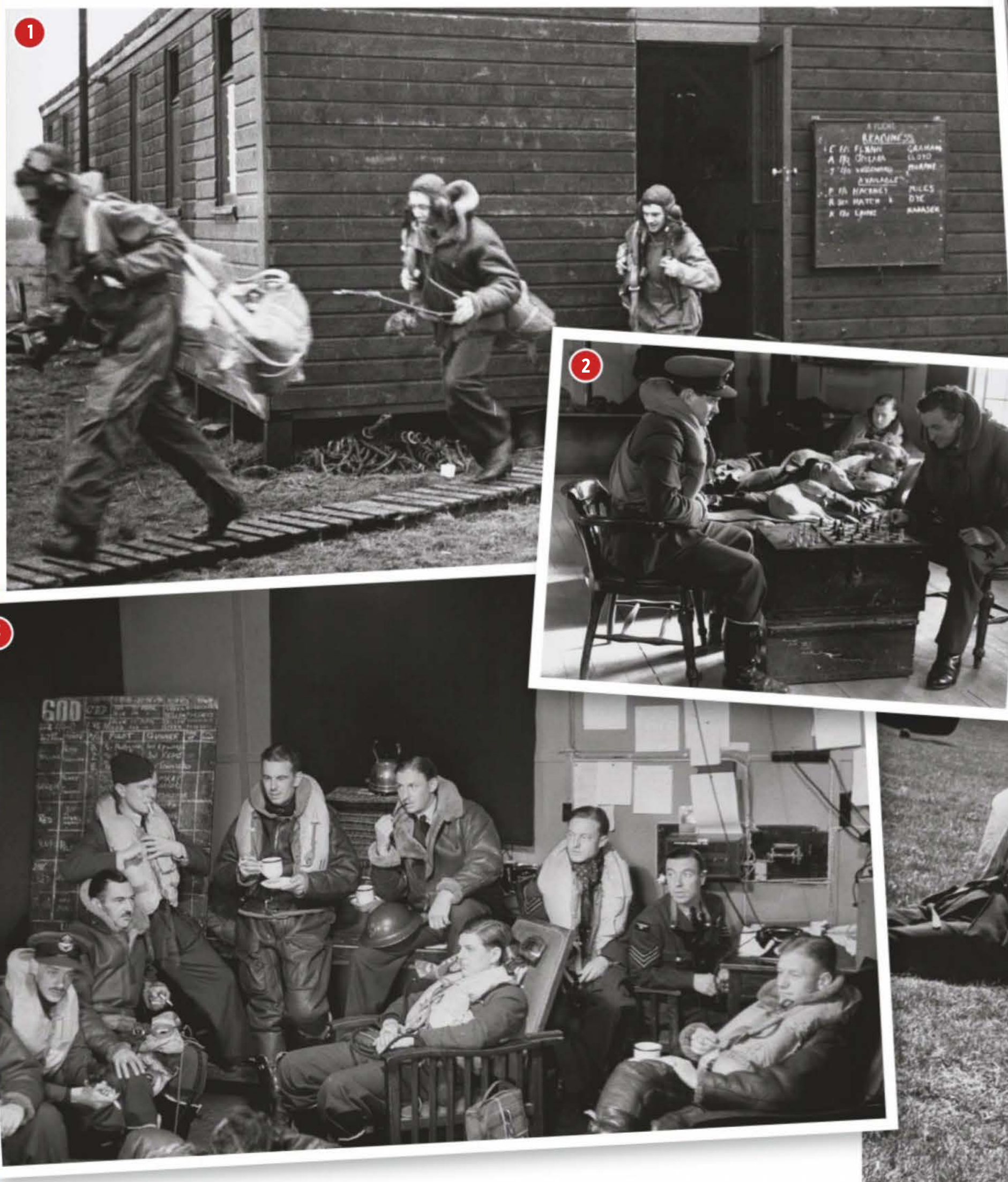
During World War II, the options for women in the workplace skyrocketed

War can advance social progress, and this one was no different – women certainly played their part in the victory. At the start, the RAF allotted mainly lowly tasks to women, confining them to kitchens and offices, but they soon began to expand into more challenging roles. Members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) worked as plotters operating the giant map tables in the smoke-filled, high-stress fighter control rooms from where the daily battles were directed. At Uxbridge – HQ of the 11 Group, covering southeast England – 85 per cent of the staff were female. Women also worked in intelligence, cracking codes and analysing aerial reconnaissance photos. And female German speakers discovered vital information by listening in to the conversations of Luftwaffe crews.

RAF stations were in the front line, and many came under attack. Some air force traditionalists feared that women might not be able to cope with the dangers. They were proved wrong over and over again. When Biggin Hill was attacked on 30 August, a bomb hit a trench where WAAFs were sheltering, injuring several and killing one. Once they had been dug out, the survivors went calmly back to work.

FIGHTER COMMAND AT WORK AND PLAY

A peek into the lives of RAF fighter pilots when they weren't battling Germans from their cockpits



1. Fighter pilots laden with kit run to their planes **2.** Two fighter pilots play a game of chess in a rest hut at the airfield **3.** Pilots await their orders at an RAF Fighter Command station **4.** RAF pilots enjoy some downtime between sorties **5.** An RAF pilot hunkers down for some precious sleep between missions **6.** RAF Flying Officer Leonard Haines sits on his Supermarine Spitfire Mk I **7.** A group of fighter pilots relax beside their Hawker Hurricane Mk I fighters

GETTY IMAGES X7

DID YOU KNOW?

TOP DOG

The highest scoring RAF pilot of the Battle of Britain was a Czech pilot named Josef František, who flew with No. 303 Squadron. No. 303 only joined the fighting on 31 August 1940, but it became Fighter Command's most deadly squadron.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN IN NUMBERS

These explosive figures relating to the Battle of Britain reveal some of the (deadly) costs of the conflict

2,936
The number of RAF pilots who served with Fighter Command

350
The speed in mph most Spitfires can achieve in level flight

1,023
British aircraft downed

1,887
Luftwaffe planes downed
(according to RAF statistics)

264
The average annual salary, in pounds, of an RAF officer in 1940

544
The number of RAF Fighter Command pilots and crew who died during the battle
(as well as more than 700 from Bomber Command and almost 300 from Coastal Command)

113
The number of days the battle lasted – from 10 July to 31 October 1940

15
The number of other nations whose pilots flew for Britain during the Battle of Britain

2,500
The number of Luftwaffe aircrew killed

GETTY IMAGES X2, TOPFOTO X1

Hawker Hurricane Mk I planes belonging to the No. 85 Squadron on patrol in 1940

A bomber aircrew returns home after a successful mission

DID YOU KNOW?

SLEEPLESS SOLDIERS
Combat fatigue was a real problem, with British pilots facing 15-hour shifts and heavy bombardment of their airfields. Pilots had to take to the skies and fight several times a day, and some turned to amphetamine pills to stay alert.

headed through the green lanes and ripening cornfields to their favourite pub, such as the White Hart at Brasted, Kent, which was frequented by the squadrons based at the nearby RAF base, Biggin Hill.

Station commander Group Captain Dick Grice often led the charge to the watering hole. "Dick Grice had a tannoy speaker mounted on his car; you could hear him a mile away," remembered Pete Brothers, a flight lieutenant with No. 32 Squadron. "'This is the CO, and I want three scotches and two pints of bitter.' He'd got a bunch of chaps in the car and was calling up the bar."

As the battle gathered pace, girls didn't feature much in the airmen's lives. There was no time, and many thought it was not fair to form emotional bonds when they knew they might well die tomorrow.

AGONIES OF YOUTH

Many of those fighting were barely out of adolescence and sounded more like boys than warriors in their letters home.

18+

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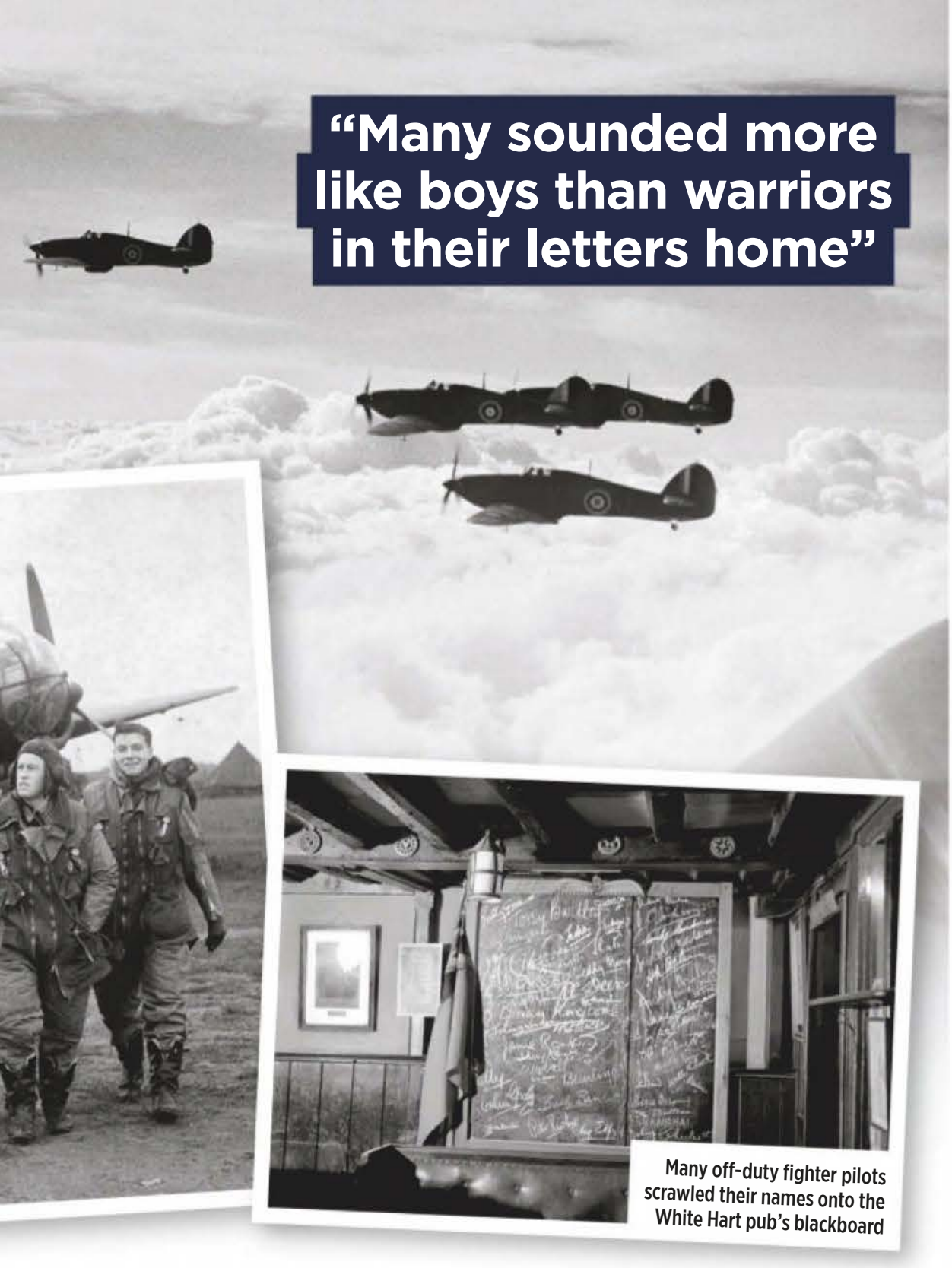

“Many sounded more like boys than warriors in their letters home”

Many off-duty fighter pilots scrawled their names onto the White Hart pub’s blackboard

“Dear Mum and Dad,” wrote 19-year-old Pilot Officer John Carpenter of 222 Squadron on 29 August, just before his unit moved base to Hornchurch and into the thick of the fighting. “I am writing this at five in the morning, we are leaving at eight and should be there by nine. I hope to be shooting Jerries down by ten.”

Three days later, his parents received an update: “Sorry I haven’t written in the last 24 hours, but my time has been rather occupied. So far I have one Messerschmitt 109 and one 110 to my credit, but in getting the 110 I was shot down and had to bale out… Lots of fun here - just what we’ve been waiting for.”

The next letter was from Maidstone Hospital, where he was recovering after being downed again – this time by friendly anti-aircraft fire. “I am not shooting a line when I say that the machine just disappeared from under me in one big BANG… I must have got a hit over the head somewhere, because I could not see coming down…”

The light-heartedness was to some extent put on. Robin Appleford of No. 66 Squadron described how, as an 18-year-old Spitfire pilot waiting for the order to scramble, he “got that sort of sick feeling all the time. I think most people if they were honest would confirm this”. But it was considered bad form to show it.

The airmen believed that they were simply doing their jobs and were often surprised at the reception they got from the public. On 18 September, Sergeant Ian Hutchinson’s Spitfire was hit over Canterbury, and he bailed out. He was taken to hospital where his shrapnel wounds were bandaged up, and as there was no transport, he had to make his own way back to Hornchurch by rail.

“I had to change trains somewhere,” he recalled. “I was standing on the station with a bandage on my leg … I was carrying a parachute under my arm, and everyone was coming up and shaking my hand, and I wished the ground would have opened up and swallowed me.”

Perhaps those shaking hands with the sergeant weren’t simply thanking him: they wanted to show their solidarity. Everyone was in this battle together, and those on the ground were demonstrating the same courage, selflessness and determination as those in the air.

It was an attitude that made a return to the pre war order of social injustice and class privilege unthinkable. The memory of those days and the example of the airmen would find political expression when the shooting finally stopped, and the country set about constructing peace from the ruins of the conflict.

PATRICK BISHOP is a military historian who has worked extensively with veterans. His books include *Fighter Boys* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2020)

ON THE PODCAST

Alasdair Cross, producer of *Spitfire: The People’s Plane* shares his thoughts on the ‘ordinary heroes’ of the Battle of Britain

It’s the age of these people that strikes you the most: 18-year-old pilots, 14-year-old factory apprentices, 17-year-old typists. When we set out to tell the story of the unsung heroes behind the Spitfire, I had no idea that so many people were helping to win World War II at an age when they should have been worrying about spots and exam results.

Teenagers were among the victims when the Luftwaffe bombed the Supermarine Spitfire factories in Southampton in September 1940. Teenagers, too, were a crucial part of the team that dismantled the surviving machine tools and moved them out to bus depots, a laundry and even a glove factory – anywhere that would hide Spitfire production from German bombers.

It’s perhaps their youth at the time that made so many of the heroes of the Home Front reluctant to tell their stories or be seen to boast of their role in victory. Fortunately for us, enough of them kept diaries through the Battle of Britain that capture the excitement of the era and pull you up with moments of genuine fear.

Those voices leap off the page and into our podcast, revealing the real people behind the clichés of stiff upper lips and ‘Roll Out The Barrel’ singalongs. Of course, there are plenty of stirring tales of bravery and love affairs by searchlight, but it’s the moments when these ordinary heroes pause and consider the thin line they’re treading between life and death that really cut through.

ALASDAIR CROSS is producer of the ten-part podcast series *Spitfire: The People’s Plane*

GET HOOKED

LISTEN

The ten-part podcast *Spitfire: The People’s Plane* is now available on the BBC World Service.
bbc.co.uk/programmes/w13xtv79

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The changing face of marriage

From popping the question to hen and stag celebrations and the big day itself, historian **Emily Brand** traces how matrimony has evolved through the centuries

GETTY IMAGES X2

Alliance vs affection

A brief history of... courtship

The supposed 'death of romance' is a common lament in modern times – but how romantic were the courtships of our ancestors? In Western culture, where only marriage could produce legitimate offspring, the wooing of a spouse has been a fundamental part of human existence.

The practice of courtship (with a view to marriage) was often bound by particular rules, especially in the upper classes. Advice on the 'art of love' survives from ancient Rome, from medieval France and continues to flourish today. But inevitably, as ideas and expectations about marriage have evolved over the centuries, so too have the rituals of courtship.

For centuries, the purpose of upper-class marriage was to forge an alliance beneficial to both families, whether that meant the acquisition of titles, fortunes, or the influential contacts of new in-laws. Here a match was often entirely negotiated by the couple's parents, and the courtship swiftly orchestrated through chaperoned visits, correspondence, and gifts.

The roles were highly gendered, with the lady receiving the addresses of her male suitor; one 1670s matrimonial guide declared that, "modesty in a woman is required, boldness in a man".

Influenced by the rituals of medieval 'courtly love', expressions of devotion were made through poetry, music, or a well-timed sigh. As for gifts, gold was the "vanquisher of women", though books, ribbons, locks of hair, and coins etched with hearts were also exchanged.

The later 18th century saw a huge shift, as marriage was increasingly linked to affection rather than alliance. Young couples were emboldened to reject parental control, and suitors increasingly expected to "fill her ears with themes of love". Here we meet a favourite 'golden age' of romance for modern audiences: the highly mannered but love-orientated fiction of Jane Austen's era.

The opportunities for long-distance romance blossomed alongside the blooming of the postal service

HAUNTING ADVICE

Advances in technology promptly ushered in new romantic opportunities: as soon as popular print developed in the 17th century, people began placing 'lonely hearts' adverts; as international travel improved in the 1800s, more ships of husband-hunters set out for British India; reforms and restructuring of the postal service from the 1840s made it much easier to conduct a courtship by correspondence.

In the 20th century, expectations of courtship were transformed by the liberal social and sexual attitudes of the 1960s and '70s, which initiated a gradual levelling of the power balance between the sexes and placed romantic love on a pedestal even above the necessity of marriage itself. The recent development of instant messaging and dating apps has opened up what feels like an unlimited pool of potential partners, and often reduces the earliest stage of romantic correspondence to a 'right-swipe' and a brief exchange of messages.

In an age where women are no longer prizes to be caught, the centuries-old advice to "haunt her like a shadow" until she relents is increasingly criticised. Though many look nostalgically at the etiquette of old, by letting go of the redundant rituals of the past we have gained independence, choice, and a better chance at finding a loving partnership.

The fascination with courtly love persisted for centuries after its medieval heyday

GETTY IMAGES X5

Gold rings were given as promises of engagement in Roman times, but diamonds wouldn't make an appearance until the 15th century

Ringing in the changes

A brief history of... proposals

In an age when people generally hope to star in their own grand love story, popping the question is a moment of great importance – and one to be captured and posted on social media.

But despite a new obsession with sharing these most private moments publicly, many central aspects of the traditional proposal echo down the centuries. Engagement rings, for example, have a long history. The giving of a gold ring to signify a promise of marriage existed in the culture of ancient Rome, and the bride-to-be was certainly expected to wear it in public.

The practice of proposing was also widespread in the Middle Ages, although it was perhaps not taken seriously enough by male suitors. Church legislation introduced in the 13th century attempted to crack down on proposals made by gentlemen to women "in jest, so that he might more easily fornicate with them", but it was not until the Restoration that a gentleman could face legal action and a fine if they abandoned a woman to whom they were engaged (or had implied marriage to).

Instances of offering diamond rings appear among the wealthy from the 1470s, and became a common feature of the 19th-century proposal as they became a cheaper commodity – but it was not until a marketing push of the 1940s that demand for diamonds was set into 'tradition'.

The reason for conducting proposals 'on one knee' is hazier. There may be some truth in the idea that such declarations of love might be inspired by medieval courtly love, in which a man demonstrated his devotion to his 'lady', who he existed to serve but who was unobtainable (and he therefore would not marry). However, there is little evidence to suggest that this kneeling position, while implying general servitude and admiration, was adopted during a marriage proposal specifically before the 19th century.

Other elements of the traditional marriage proposal are beginning to lose popularity. With the rise of women's equality, the tradition of a suitor formally asking the bride's father for permission to propose – a hangover from the long-accepted idea that any woman was 'property' to be transferred between men – is increasingly considered outdated.

BENDING TRADITIONS

As with courtship, tradition has dictated that the man should take the active role in the proposal – with two exceptions. The custom of 'permitting' women to subvert the process and propose on a leap year has elusive origins, though it was already a subject for amusement in 1816, when one newspaper cheekily declared that Princess Charlotte had chosen her own husband, "being privileged by the courtesy of this being a leap year".

The folklorists of the 19th century spread their own myths: one claimed it as an Elizabethan 'Commun Lawe' practice by which "the ladyes have the sole privilege [of] making love unto the men"; another pointed to an Irish legend about a deal struck between St Bridget and St Patrick; a third claimed it was a law introduced by a 13th-century Scottish queen. Whatever the case, the commercialisation of the idea in the 20th century has cemented it in popular consciousness, though it now applies only to 29 February, rather than the entire year.

The second exception can be seen in Queen Victoria and Prince Alber engagement in 1839: being the rei monarch, etiquette dictated that s requested his hand in marriage – he still presented her with a serp shaped gold ring.

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ABOVE: **Newspapers at the turn of the 20th century decried hen parties where, they said, women drank as though they were men**

RIGHT: **Meanwhile, this 1889 cigar box parades an acceptably boisterous stag party**

FAR RIGHT: **Ancient Greek women were keen to stay in the good books of Artemis, goddess of chastity and childbirth**

GETTY IMAGES X5

Lost freedom vs duty

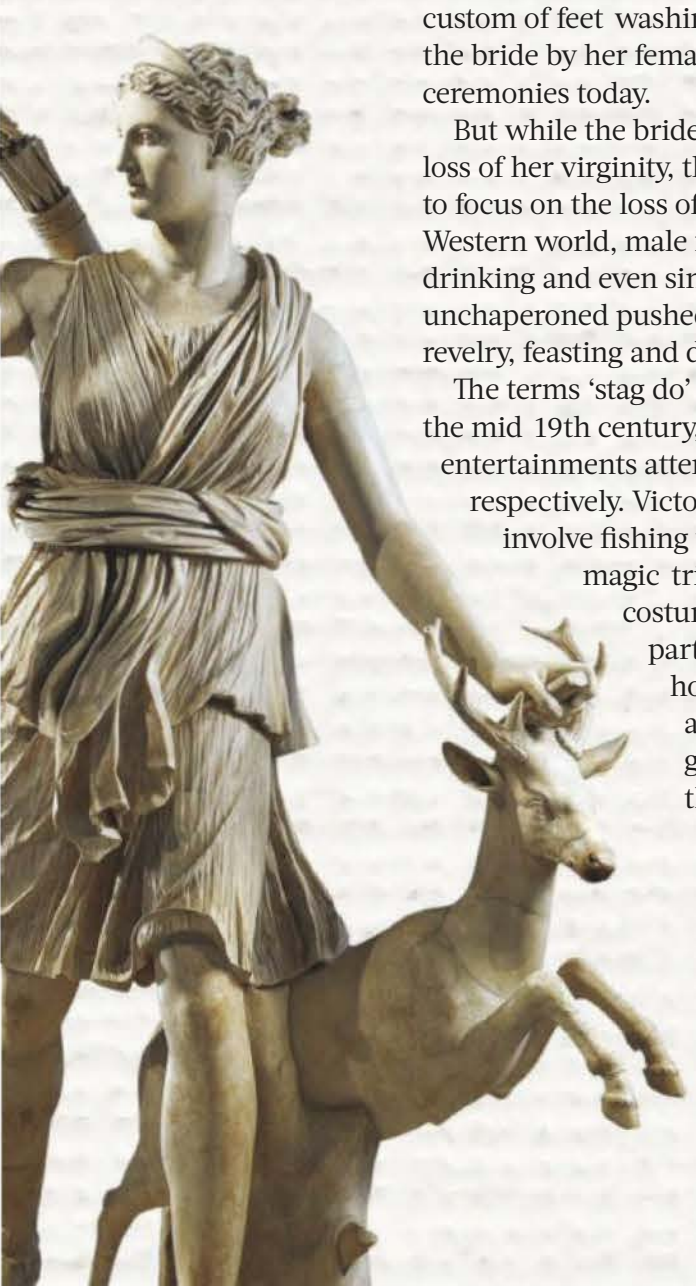
A brief history of… stag nights and hen dos

The transition from unmarried to married is one of life's biggest changes, and throughout history the accompanying rituals have been largely dictated by gender roles.

For the bride-to-be, most pre-wedding customs were more about preparation than fun. In Ancient Greece, the day before marriage was known as the *proaulia*. On this day the bride, with her mother and other women, would make offerings and sacrifices to appease the gods who might see fit to ruin the day – especially Artemis, goddess of chastity and childbirth. Similarly, the old Scottish custom of feet washing, a symbolic 'cleansing' of the bride by her female friends, persists in some ceremonies today.

But while the bride traditionally anticipated the loss of her virginity, the groom was more likely to focus on the loss of his bachelorhood. In the Western world, male freedoms in sexual experience, drinking and even simply leaving the home unchaperoned pushed their celebrations towards revelry, feasting and debauchery.

The terms 'stag do' and 'hen do' originate in the mid 19th century, though they referred to entertainments attended only by men or women respectively. Victorian-era 'stag' parties might involve fishing weekends, oyster suppers, magic trick shows and dressing up in costume. In Ohio in 1860, a "stag party" of 16 married gentlemen hoping to enjoy "a sleigh ride, a supper, and a 'good time' generally" was scuppered when their wives turned up to spoil their fun. By the 1870s, equivalent "hen parties" had emerged, generally featuring singing, dancing, tea and genteel amusements – though in 1907 one newspaper lamented that "in what is vulgarly called a hen party cigarettes and liquers are handed round and partaken of just as though men were of the company".



RUDE REVOLUTION

After decades applied to single-sex school frolics, theatrical shows, birthdays, and office parties, in the 1960s the terms 'stag' and 'hen' irreparably collided with pre-wedding celebrations specifically. With the more liberated sexual attitudes of the 1960s and 70s, women increasingly indulged in celebrations more akin to their grooms: one hen party of 1976 came to an abrupt end after the male stripper was fined for acting in "a lewd, obscene and disgusting manner". The industry has since exploded into a hugely profitable purveyor of games, costumes, events and sex-themed merchandise for partygoers.

As tastes and expectations have grown more elaborate, the celebrations have evolved: small parties on the eve of the wedding have been increasingly replaced by hyper-organised weekends abroad, with an itinerary of activities and often taking place months in advance. But while the outward accessories have changed, the focus on the night as a rite of passage remains, and it remains one underpinned by sex – even if it is no longer socially acceptable for either bride or groom to enjoy their last 'night of liberty' too much. "It's no yoursel' that's having the final fling," commented one Scottish stag-goer in 1980s, "everybody else is having it for you".

The big day that keeps getting bigger

A brief history of… weddings

In Britain, the average cost of a modern wedding runs into the tens of thousands, but things haven't always been so extravagant. As centuries have worn on, the ceremony has picked up new rituals, trappings, and financial expectations.

Some elements have stood the test of time. The traditional vows of a Church of England service – I take thee … for richer, for poorer, etc – date to 1549, and the earliest known mention of "brydes maydes" to 1552. One book of the 1680s highlighted the centrality of wedding rings: "the giving and receiving of a ring, is a sign of all others, most usual [in] matrimonial contracts". It also explained the custom of placing it on the fourth finger of the left hand, as "there is a vein of blood which passeth from that fourth finger unto the heart". In 1803, an aristocratic masquerade themed as "a Village Wedding" featured "the usual paraphernalia of plumb-cake, favors, appropriate ballads, fiddles, &c".

Many other rituals have been lost along the way. Among other things, the tightening legal restrictions of the 1700s specified that the ceremony must take place in a church or by special licence, and always by an ordained clergyman – at a stroke delegitimising a swathe of common law 'weddings' conducted in moonlit fields, by informal exchanges of vows, or the fabled 'jumping over a broom-stick' together. (Gossips joked that the scandalous secret wedding of the Prince of Wales to Maria Fitzherbert in 1785 was solemnised 'by hopping o'er a broom').

ROYAL FANFARE

Royal weddings have generally offered an excuse for spectacle and public celebration, from the lavish parade to St Paul's made by the doomed Prince Arthur and his bride Catherine of Aragon in 1501 to the televised ceremonies of Princes William and Harry.

The wedding of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1840 is credited with popularising matrimonial trends – notably with her lace-trimmed, white satin gown. Previously, all brides had simply worn their finest dress of any colour, though among the wealthiest this was often silver, white or cream. At the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Caroline of Brunswick in 1795, it was the bridesmaids who wore "virgin habits, vis. a white satin body and crape petticoat". Adopting this symbol of purity herself, the popular Victoria established a fashion that gradually became tradition across all classes.

In the 20th century, the wedding was increasingly embraced as a legal commitment rather than a necessarily religious one, bringing more freedom in venue and the wording of vows. The rise of feminist thought has also inspired many to shed traditions such as being 'given away', or to introduce a bride's speech.

As the institution of marriage itself continues to evolve – such as the recent introduction of same-sex civil marriage, and increasingly widespread cross cultural ceremonies – new traditions will be established. Nonetheless, one sensible piece of advice from the 19th century will no doubt persist: 1843 book *The Wives of England* warns that the wedding day is only the beginning of a long and challenging "practical duty". ▶

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1

ABOVE: **Though the practice of exchanging rings has persisted, the idea that the vein of the fourth finger on the left hand leads directly to the heart has been debunked**

RIGHT: **Queen Victoria wed Prince Albert on 10 February 1840 in St James's Palace – and in doing so, popularised the tradition of the white bridal gown**

Sometimes, the honeymoon really did begin by driving off into the sunset

Getting away from it all

A brief history of... honeymoons

It is only natural that a newly married couple might want some time away from the spotlight to enjoy each other's company, and a short trip following the ceremony is a long-standing tradition.

In the early modern era, undertaking a post-wedding 'tour' allowed wealthy couples to visit friends and family, while others preferred to retreat from society and get to know each other better. Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn reportedly spent over a week at Thornbury Castle in Gloucestershire, while Charles II withdrew with his new bride to Hampton Court Palace. There were other reasons to wish for privacy: one late 18th-century newspaper boldly declared that after their wedding a military officer and an heiress "set out for Norwich, to consummate their nuptials".

In the 19th century, affordable railway travel allowed even working-class newlyweds to take a special trip to the seaside or the city, while more affluent couples might escape to the continent or plan a 'bridal tour' of the Lake District. But far from the pleasure-filled break we hope for today, Victorian critics described this period as "a month of enforced seclusion". If married during the summer, at least, they might go sightseeing – winter brides would be stuck inside, "fearfully bored".

Rail travel opened up honeymooning to the working class, with seaside trips a popular option

Until the end of the 1800s, the word 'honeymoon' did not in fact denote the post-wedding excursion, but merely the first month of marriage. Providing one of the earliest recorded uses, a book of 1552 explains that the term 'hony mone' originated with "the vulgar people" and "proverbially applied to such a be newe maried, whiche wyll not fall out at the fyrste, but thone loveth the other at the beginnynge excedyngly, the likelyhode of theyr exceadynge love appearing to aswage".

SHORTER, BUT SWEETER?

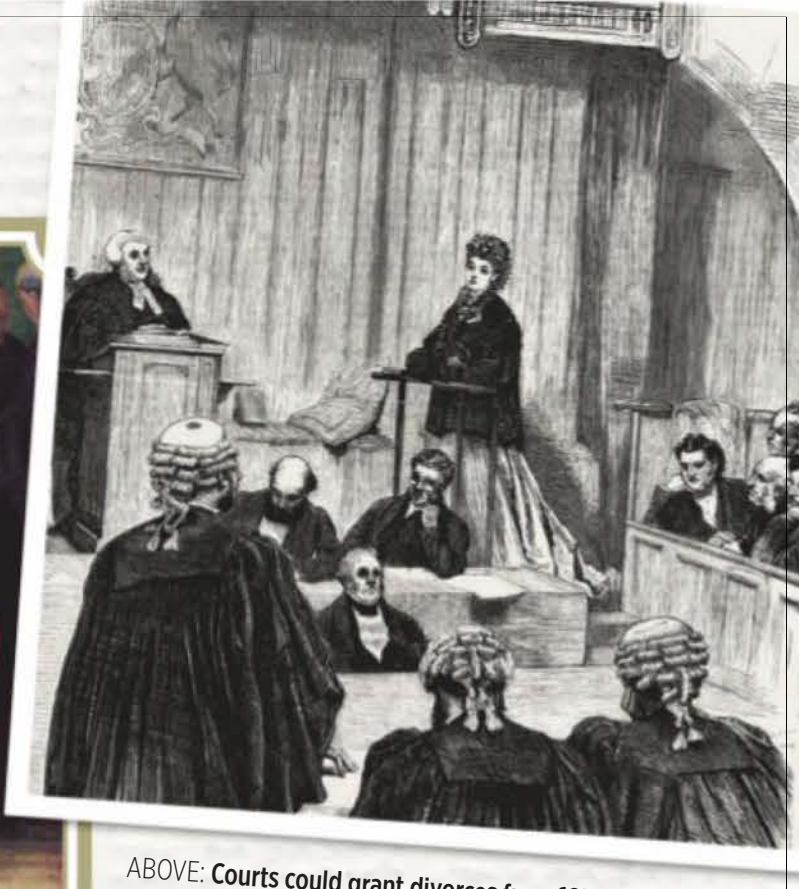
In the mid-18th century, Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* defined the honeymoon as "the first month after marriage when there is nothing but tenderness and pleasure" – the implication being that their affections would wane with the Moon. Claims that it was linked to an ancient practice of drinking "honey-mead" for 30 days seem to have been sown by the Victorians.

In the later 19th century the term was increasingly applied to the wedding trip itself in 1881, one fashionable magazine declared that avoiding society was no longer a prerequisite and "short honeymoons" were now in vogue. "Some brides are contented with three days' retirement", it declared, "a whole month is hopelessly old fashioned". In "these fast-going times", it explained, the pace of life was simply "too great".

By the turn of the century, as the length of the traditional celebration shortened, the holiday could become more extravagant. Journalists of the early 1900s gleefully described adventurous honeymoon trips in balloons, caravans, submarines, or scaling mountains and voyaging to the South Pole.

Fashions in honeymooning come and go like any other. With the cost of modern weddings often prohibitive, many couples now choose a less expensive 'mini-moon' – a return, perhaps, to the more modest bridal tours of our ancestors.

GETTY IMAGES X4



ABOVE: **Courts could grant divorces from 1857, though for most this was prohibitively expensive**

LEFT: **Catherine of Aragon pleaded with Henry VIII to reconsider; he had the marriage dissolved anyway, but his 'great matter' had little bearing on wider divorce laws**

The end of the road

A brief history of… separation and divorce

As marriages were for centuries focused on contract rather than compatibility, it's unsurprising that history is littered with unhappy ones.

Medieval Catholicism decreed that a union solemnised before God could only be properly dissolved by the death of wife or husband – with some exceptions, such as being related or taking holy orders, permitting a form of annulment. Henry VIII's desperation to separate from Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn was a major turning point: with the Pope refusing to grant an annulment, Henry authorised the Archbishop of Canterbury to split the English church from Rome. Yet despite this high-profile instance, opportunities for legal separation remained minimal for centuries.

A watershed case of 1670 established that a divorce could be granted by act of parliament, though it was a prohibitively expensive and reputation-destroying process. A husband had to publicly prove his wife's adultery, whereas a wife was required to prove adultery plus cruelty (usually, domestic violence). By the mid-19th century, just 324 divorces had been granted. Even when new legislation of 1857 allowed a divorce to be granted by a secular court (without involving parliament), it remained too costly for most. In the meantime, the less affluent had devised their own solutions. As newspaper notices for 'runaway' spouses and the census returns of bigamous persons suggest, the simplest was obvious, if far from legal – desertion. Journalists also enjoyed reporting on 'wife-sales' in rural communities, as late as 1914.

It was the 20th century that transformed first the practical opportunities for, and then the moral perspectives about, marriage. Advancements in women's social and economic equality fuelled a law of 1923 allowing either partner to petition for divorce based on adultery; another in 1937 named desertion, insanity and drunkenness as permissible grounds. The stigma of a 'failed' marriage arguably remained until the Divorce Reform Act of 1969 allowed couples to plead that their marriage was "irretrievably broken down" and did not require the naming and shaming of a guilty party.

Though the path to complete social acceptance is perhaps still ongoing, these amendments ensured that both the law and society could view divorcees more sympathetically. In that year there were just over 51,000 divorces in England and Wales – a decade later the number was almost 140,000, and remained at least as high until 2005. As such, in the wake of more liberal legislation and advancing women's rights, the prohibitive ideal of marriage as an unbreakable commitment has shifted to one prizing individual happiness in potentially mutable circumstances. Thankfully, we are no longer bound by the tongue-in-cheek 18th-century sentiment that "the comfortable estate of widowhood is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits".

GETTY IMAGES X4

EMILY BRAND is an author and historian specialising in romantic relationships during the long 18th century. Her new book, *The Fall of the House of Byron,* is available now, published by John Murray

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BBC RADIO 4 *The Wedding Detectives*, with Cole Porter, is due to air on BBC Radio 4 later this year

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“The Ripper’s hunting ground was Whitechapel in London’s East End, an overcrowded pit of poverty and crime”

MAIN: **An engraving showing the discovery of one of Jack the Ripper’s victims in Whitechapel**

BELOW: **Newspapers of the late 1880s widely speculated on the identity of Jack the Ripper**

THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD NEWS

No. 1,293. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1888. Price One Penny.

PORTRAIT SKETCHES OF SUPPOSED WHITECHAPEL MONSTER AND INCIDENTS IN THE CASE.

McCARTHY KELLY'S LANDLORD

MAN WHO FIRST SAW THE BODY

INSPECTOR ABBERLINE

JOE BARNETT LIVED WITH KELLY

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SUPPOSED MURDERER

A MAN OF MOST VILLAINOUS APPEARANCE IN WHITECHAPEL

MATHEW PACKER TELLS A STRANGE STORY TO THE POLICE.

THE MYSTERY OF JACK THE RIPPER

No one knows the identity of the killer who butchered five women in 1888 – and that, says **Jonny Wilkes**, is what keeps the fascination with the unsolved case as strong as ever

When Jack the Ripper stalked the streets of London, the city that powered a global empire was suddenly plunged into the shadow of fear. As the leaves turned red and fell from the trees in 1888, five women were murdered and mutilated in acts of heinous butchery. Over the years, sleuths have shared a mass of theories and suspicions concerning the true identity of the monster responsible – but the case remains unsolved.

The sadistic and savage serial killer we know as Jack the Ripper made his bloody mark on history with the 'canonical five' killings – so called as 11 murders were recorded in the area between August and September of 1888, but only five were widely accepted to be victims of the Ripper. The killer's hunting ground was Whitechapel in London's East End, an overcrowded pit of poverty and crime where residents, many of them immigrants, were driven to drunkenness and prostitution. But contrary to popular belief, not all five victims were prostitutes. Yet the same terrible fate – of slashed throats, severe wounds and removed organs – befell all of the women.

The first victim was a mother of five named Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols, discovered in the early hours of 31 August with a cut across her throat so deep that she had almost been decapitated. Then, on 8 September, a second woman was found, this time in a yard on Hanbury Street. The victim, identified as Annie Chapman, had struggled with alcoholism, but she was saving up money to send her children to good schools when she died. The killer had cut her open and removed some of her organs.

By now, news of a crazed throat-cutter in Whitechapel had started to spread through London and beyond thanks to the highly sensationalised stories appearing in cheap, mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, such as *The Illustrated Police News*. The murders received unprecedented coverage, and as there was something of a vacuum of facts, a storm of wild or erroneous claims swirled in its place. For instance, the moniker 'Leather Apron' somehow became suspicious, which led to John Pizer – a bootmaker who also went by 'Leather Apron' – being arrested before his alibis checked out.

Seemingly everybody had a theory about the identity of the 'Whitechapel Murderer', and both police and press received hundreds of letters, some even purporting to be from the killer. The most famous was the 'Dear Boss' missive, written in red ink and sent to the Central News Agency before being forwarded to Scotland Yard. The author boasted of the "grand work" he did on Chapman and claimed he would "clip" the ears of his next victim. The letter was signed "Jack the Ripper" – the first time this name was used.

An increased police presence may have deterred the killer for a while, but then on 30 September came the 'double event', with the slayings of Swedish immigrant Elizabeth Stride and mother-of-three Catherine Eddowes. It appeared the killer had been interrupted during the attack on Stride, which explained why her wounds were not as extensive. The most horrendous murder was saved for the fifth victim – and the last of the 'canonical' women – Mary Jane Kelly. On 9 November, the gruesome scene was discovered in her bedroom in Miller's Court. As the Ripper could take his time indoors, her body was almost beyond recognition, and her organs had been removed and placed around the room.

DEAD END

The police made inquiries in Whitechapel, collected what evidence they could and investigated hundreds of people – all without any breakthrough. The stalling investigation led an increasingly scared public to point fingers at anyone and everyone, with foreigners receiving particularly harsh treatment. Following Eddowes' murder, police discovered graffiti reading: "The Juwes [sic] are the men that will not be blamed for nothing." The commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, General Sir Charles Warren, had it removed immediately, fearing it would stir up anti-semitic riots in the area.

The list of suspects has only grown over the past 130-plus years, as 'Ripperologists' still pore over every detail. The police suspected a butcher or surgeon due to the killer's apparent anatomical knowledge, leading to doctor Robert Donston Stephenson and American quack Francis Tumblety being investigated. Other names have been touted, including Polish Jew and barber Aaron Kosminski; Montague John Druitt, who took his own life shortly after the last murder; and Joseph Barnett, who was the final victim's lover.

Some pretty wild accusations have been thrown around, too. Richard Mansfield, a celebrated actor, was suspected of the slayings by some after he seemingly gave too convincing a performance in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Others alleged that the musician Michael Maybrick may have gotten away with the murders by relying on his fellow freemasons in the police to protect him. Author Lewis Carroll, Queen Victoria's personal physician Sir William Withey Gull and even her grandson Prince Albert Victor have all been put under the microscope. With no answer in sight, the horrifying and enthralling case remains one of history's most famous whodunits.

BBC one Emilia Fox and Professor David Wilson examine the Ripper mystery in *Jack the Ripper – The Case Reopened*, on BBC iPlayer.
bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0003wdk

Actor Richard Mansfield's portrayal of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in an 1880s play was apparently so unnerving that some claimed he could be Jack the Ripper

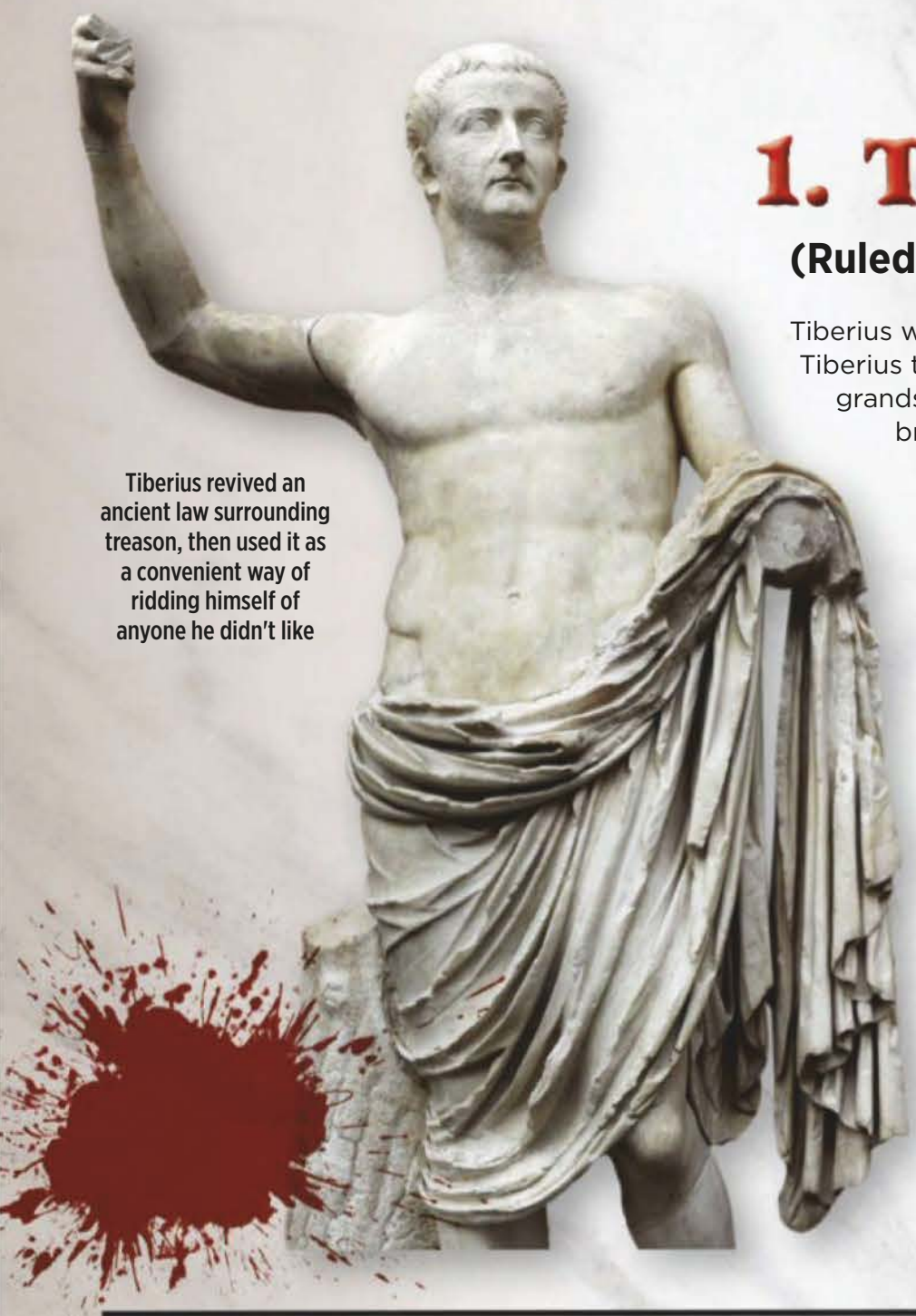
GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

ROME'S BLOODIEST EMPERORS

Many Roman emperors were mad, bad and decidedly dangerous. Some, including Nero and Domitian, have been immortalised as erratic, paranoid tyrants. But who were the worst of the bunch? Historian **Sean Lang** examines eight who are widely seen as the cruellest and shines a spotlight on some of their bizarre – and brutal – behaviour

ALAMY

Rome's bloody history – both during the days of the republic and later the empire – has provided inspiration for countless TV shows and films, including 2000s HBO drama *Rome*



Tiberius revived an ancient law surrounding treason, then used it as a convenient way of ridding himself of anyone he didn't like

1. TIBERIUS

(Ruled AD 14–37)

Tiberius was the successor to Augustus, but Augustus did not particularly want Tiberius to succeed him. In fact, it was only the untimely deaths of the emperor's grandsons Gaius and Lucius – and Augustus's decision to exile their younger brother, Agrippa Postumus – that put Tiberius in line for the imperial throne.

Tiberius was a gifted military commander and respected the authority of the senate. However, he had a gloomy and increasingly suspicious outlook that won him few friends and led him into a bitter dispute with Agrippina – the widow of his war hero nephew, Germanicus. Fatally, Tiberius relied heavily on the ambitious and ruthless administrator, Aelius Sejanus, who instituted a reign of terror until Tiberius, learning that Sejanus planned to seize power himself, had him arrested and executed.

Tiberius then sank into a state of dangerous suspicion, distrusting everyone around him. He retreated to the island of Capri, revived the ancient accusation of *maiestas* (treason) and used it to sentence to death anyone he suspected. Roman historians Suetonius and Tacitus painted a picture of Tiberius living on Capri as a depraved sexual predator. This may owe more to colourful imagination than to fact – but he did make use of a sheer drop into the sea to dispose of anyone he took issue with. Tiberius was not a monster in the mould of some of his successors, but he certainly set the tone for what was to come.

"Tiberius made use of a sheer drop into the sea to dispose of anyone he took issue with"

2. GAIUS

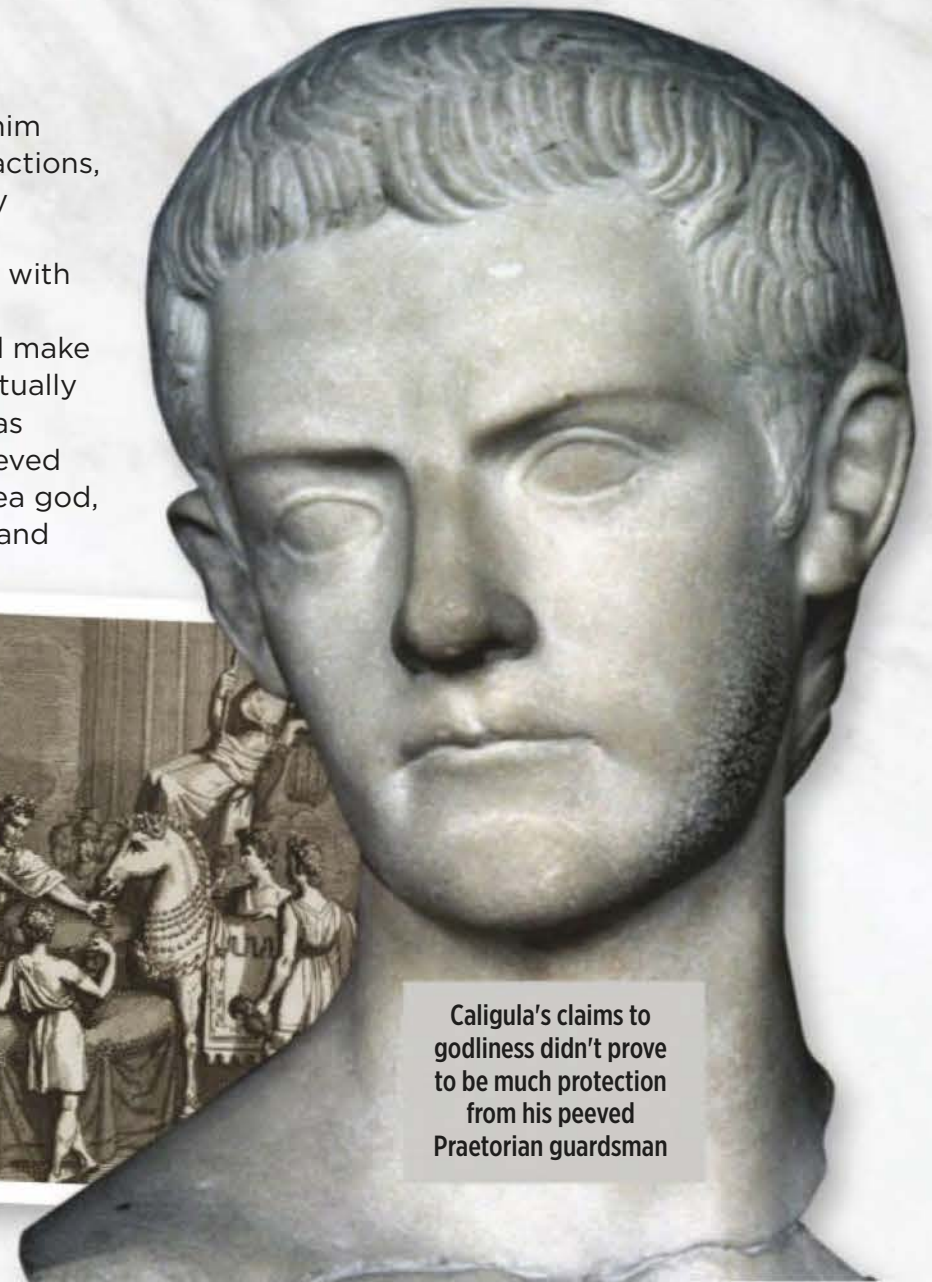
Aka Caligula (ruled AD 37–41)

Gaius (known as 'Caligula', meaning 'little bootee' – a childhood nickname given him by his father's troops) – is perhaps best known for a series of downright strange actions, such as declaring war on the sea and proclaiming himself a god. His reign actually began quite promisingly, but after a serious bout of illness, Caligula developed a paranoia that led him into alarmingly erratic behaviour – possibly including incest with his sister, Julia Drusilla, whom he named as his heir.

Caligula took particular delight in humiliating the senate, claiming that he could make anyone consul, even his horse (though, contrary to the popular story, he didn't actually go through with this). As the son of Germanicus, a prominent general, Caligula was keen to establish his military credentials. However, his campaign in Germany achieved little, and his abortive invasion of Britain had to be turned into a battle with the sea god, Neptune. He is said to have told his troops to attack the waves with their swords and gather seashells as booty.

Caligula declared himself a god and used his 'divine status' to establish what was, in effect, an absolutist monarchy in Rome. He followed Tiberius's example of using treason trials to eliminate enemies, real or imagined. But in the end, it was the emperor's rather childish taunting of Cassius Chaerea, a member of the Praetorian Guard, that brought him down. Chaerea arranged for Caligula's assassination at the Palatine Games. He apparently protested that he couldn't be killed because he was an immortal god, but he turned out to be rather less immortal than he thought.

This engraving by Persichini shows Caligula offering his horse a drink at a banquet. Despite the legend, he didn't make the steed a consul



Caligula's claims to godliness didn't prove to be much protection from his peeved Praetorian guardsman

GETTY IMAGES X5, ALAMY X2

Peter Ustinov portrayed Nero in the 1951 film *Quo Vadis.* In this scene he strangles his lover, Poppaea, but the real Nero kicked her to death

3. NERO

(Ruled AD 54–68)

Nero is the Roman emperor we all love to hate, and not without reason. He was actually a competent administrator and benefitted from the aid of some very able men, including his tutor – the writer Seneca. However, Nero was also unquestionably a murderer, starting with his step-brother Britannicus, with whom he had been supposed to share power. He then masterminded the death of his own wife, Octavia – after deserting her for his lover, Poppaea, Nero then had Octavia executed on a trumped-up charge of adultery.

Probably on Poppaea's prompting, Nero had his own mother murdered, but his initial attempt – making use of a collapsible boat – went wrong, and she had to be beaten to death instead. He also snuffed out Poppaea's life himself, repeatedly kicking her in a fit of anger while she was pregnant with his child.

Contrary to the myth, Nero did not start the great fire of Rome; neither did he 'fiddle' (nor even play the lyre), while the city burned. In fact, he organised relief work for its victims and planned the rebuilding. But Nero's fondness for his own music and poetry, which made him force senators to sit through his own interminable and talentless recitals, meant people could easily believe it of him.

Nero was much hated for building his huge, tasteless 'golden house' complex (aka the Domus Aurea, a large landscaped portico villa) in the ruins of what had been the public area of central Rome. He undoubtedly persecuted Christians in large numbers, and his infantile insistence on winning the laurels at the Olympic Games in Greece – whether or not he actually won, or indeed finished the race – brought the empire into disrepute.

Nero was eventually toppled by an army revolt that spiralled out of control, becoming a destructive three-way civil war. ▸

Nero gives the command for his mother to be murdered in a complex sea accident. When that doesn't work, he opts for a blunter approach: he has her beaten to death

4. DOMITIAN

(Ruled AD 81–96)

Domitian was the younger son of Vespasian, the general who had emerged from the chaos after Nero's fall and restored a certain element of stability and normality to Roman public life. Unfortunately, Domitian had inherited none of his father's charm. He also suffered from deep suspicion of those around him, amounting to paranoia – possibly a result of his narrow escape from death during the civil war that followed Nero's overthrow. He was particularly sceptical of the senate and had a number of leading citizens executed for conspiring against him, including 12 ex-consuls and two of his own cousins.

Domitian's rule became steadily more autocratic, and he demanded to be treated like a god. He turned against philosophers, sending many of them into exile, and he even arranged the judicial murder of the chief vestal virgin, having her buried alive in a specially constructed tomb. He was eventually brought down by a conspiracy arranged by his wife, Domitia Longina, and was somewhat inexpertly stabbed by a palace servant. Some historians think Domitian's tyranny has been overstated, whereas others have compared him to Saddam Hussein at his most vengeful.

ABOVE: Domitia Longina divorced a husband to marry Domitian, the emperor she would later conspire to have murdered

LEFT: Domitian was autocratic and paranoid, with a particular ire for the senate

"Domitian's rule became increasingly autocratic, and he demanded to be treated like a god"

Joaquin Phoenix starred as Commodus in Ridley Scott's 2000 film, *Gladiator*. As shown in the movie, he was a firm fan of gladiatorial combat and entered the arena himself

5. COMMODUS

(Ruled AD 180–192)

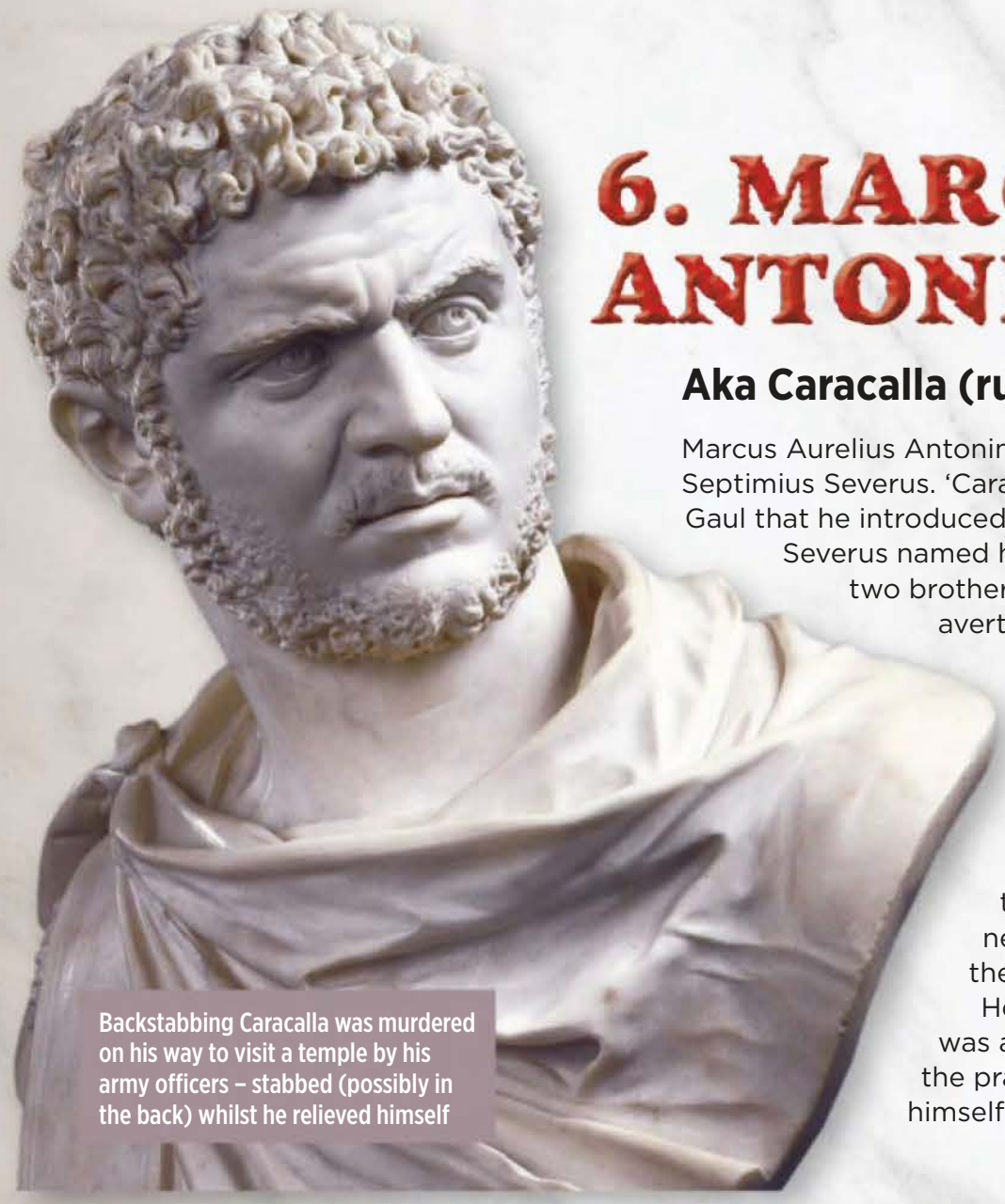
Commodus was immortalised by Joaquin Phoenix in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000). The emperor was indeed a passionate follower of gladiatorial combat and himself fought in the arena, sometimes dressed as Hercules, for which he awarded himself divine honours, declaring that he was a Roman Hercules.

Commodus was the son of the philosopher emperor, Marcus Aurelius. Although the film's scene in which Commodus kills his own father is invention, it *is* true that Commodus was the very opposite of all that his father had stood for. Vain and pleasure-seeking, Commodus virtually bankrupted the Roman treasury, and he sought to fill it up again by having wealthy citizens executed for treason so that he could confiscate their property.

Soon, people began plotting against him, including his own sister. The plots were foiled, however, and Commodus set about executing even more people, either because they were conspiring against him or because he thought they might do so in the future. Eventually, the praetorian prefect and the emperor's own court chamberlain hired a professional athlete to strangle Commodus to death in the bath. ▶

Commodus was strangled by a professional athlete – his own wrestling partner, Narcissus

ALAMY X2, GETTY IMAGES X2



Backstabbing Caracalla was murdered on his way to visit a temple by his army officers – stabbed (possibly in the back) whilst he relieved himself

6. MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS I

Aka Caracalla (ruled AD 211–217)

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus I was the son of the highly able and effective emperor, Septimius Severus. 'Caracalla' was a nickname, derived from a hooded coat from Gaul that he introduced to Rome.

Severus named his younger son, Geta, as co-heir with Caracalla, but the two brothers quickly fell out, and civil war seemed imminent. Caracalla averted this scenario, though, by having Geta murdered.

Caracalla dealt brutally with opponents: he set about exterminating Geta's supporters, and similarly wiped out those caught up in one of the city of Alexandria's regular local risings against Roman rule.

Caracalla is remembered for the magnificent bath complex named after him in Rome, and for extending Roman citizenship to all free men within the empire – though he was probably simply trying to raise the money he needed to enable his own lavish spending. He certainly turned the surplus he inherited from his father into a heavy deficit.

He was a successful, if ruthless, military commander, but he was assassinated by a group of ambitious army officers, including the praetorian prefect Opellius Macrinus, who promptly proclaimed himself emperor.

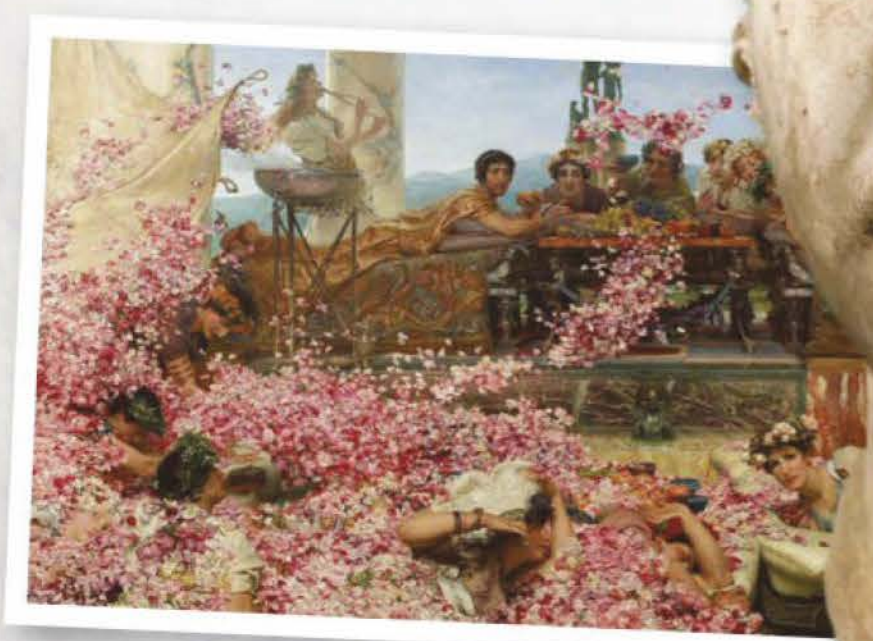
7. MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS II

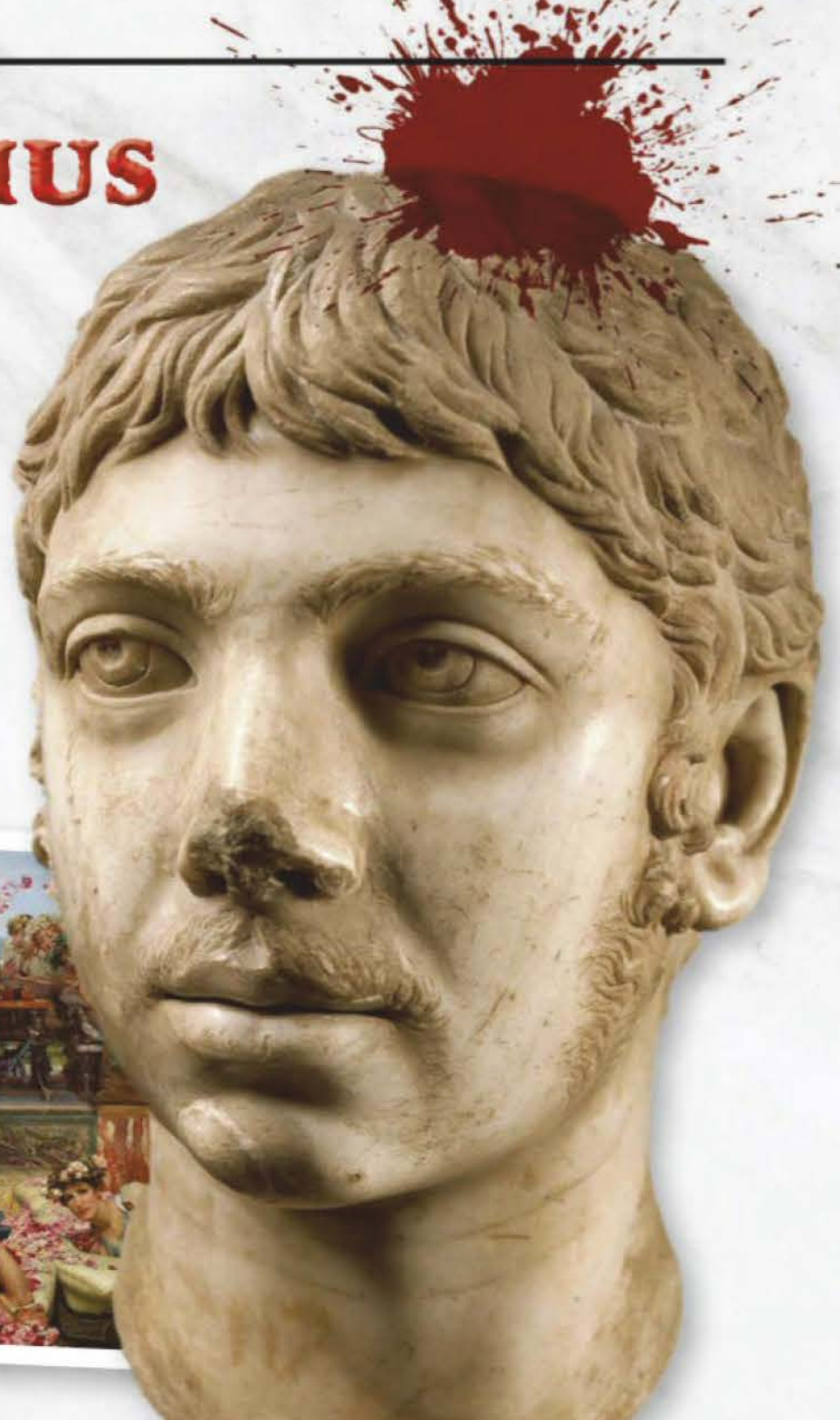
Aka Elagabalus (ruled AD 218–222)

Elagabalus was a relative of Septimius Severus's wife, put forward to challenge Opellius Macrinus for the throne after the murder of Caracalla. Elagabalus overthrew Macrinus and promptly embarked on an increasingly bizarre reign. His nickname came from his role as priest of the cult of the Syrian god Elah-Gabal, which he tried to introduce into Rome to universal consternation, even having himself circumcised to show his devotion to the cult.

Elagabalus deliberately offended Roman moral and religious principles, setting up a conical black stone fetish – a symbol of the sun god Sol Invictus Elagabalus – on the Palatine Hill and marrying the chief vestal. Under normal circumstances, such a union would have meant that she had to be put to death. Romans were particularly offended by Elagabalus's sexual behaviour. As well as a string of marriages, the emperor also openly took male lovers, and he seems to have been what might nowadays be recognised as transgender.

Few historians have much good to say about Elagabalus, and eventually the Romans' patience gave out: the emperor was murdered in a conspiracy organised by his own grandmother.





RIGHT: **Elagabalus allegedly suffocated some banquet guests by covering them in petals – although this is likely fiction**

FAR RIGHT: **Elagabalus, whose sexual proclivities offended many Romans**

GETTY IMAGES X7

This 15th-century painting depicts the martyred St Sebastian – a Christian member of Diocletian's Praetorian Guard. The emperor ordered archers to shoot him to death

"Diocletian tried to totally eradicate Christianity with utter ruthlessness"

8. DIOCLETIAN

(Ruled AD 284–305)

It may seem unfair to brand Diocletian one of Rome's bloodiest emperors, since he is best known for the risky but sensible decision to split the government of the Roman empire in two, taking Marcus Aurelius Maximianus as his co-emperor, each with a subordinate called a Caesar, in a four-way division of power called the Tetrarchy.

Diocletian was a good administrator, and he managed to hold his divided command structure together at a time when the Roman empire was coming under increasing pressure from enemies outside its boundaries. What makes Diocletian worthy of inclusion here, however, is his utterly ruthless persecution of Christians.

Christians had long been regarded by most Romans with a mixture of distaste and a rather amused tolerance, but Diocletian set about trying to totally eradicate the religion. Churches were to be destroyed, scriptures publicly burnt, and Christian priests imprisoned and forced to conduct sacrifices to the emperor on pain of death. Any Christians who refused to give up their faith were brutally tortured and executed.

It was an unusually vicious persecution, given that the Romans were usually accepting of other religions. Seemingly, it reflects Diocletian's fear that, at a time when unity of purpose was essential for the empire's survival, Christianity represented a rejection of Roman religious values that he could not afford to allow.

Diocletian was the ruler who established the Tetrarchy, in which the empire was split in two, each governed by a senior and junior emperor

SEAN LANG is a senior lecturer in history at Anglia Ruskin University. His publications include *European History For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2011) and *First World War For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2014)

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BBC RADIO 4

Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the life of Nero on an episode of *In Our Time*.

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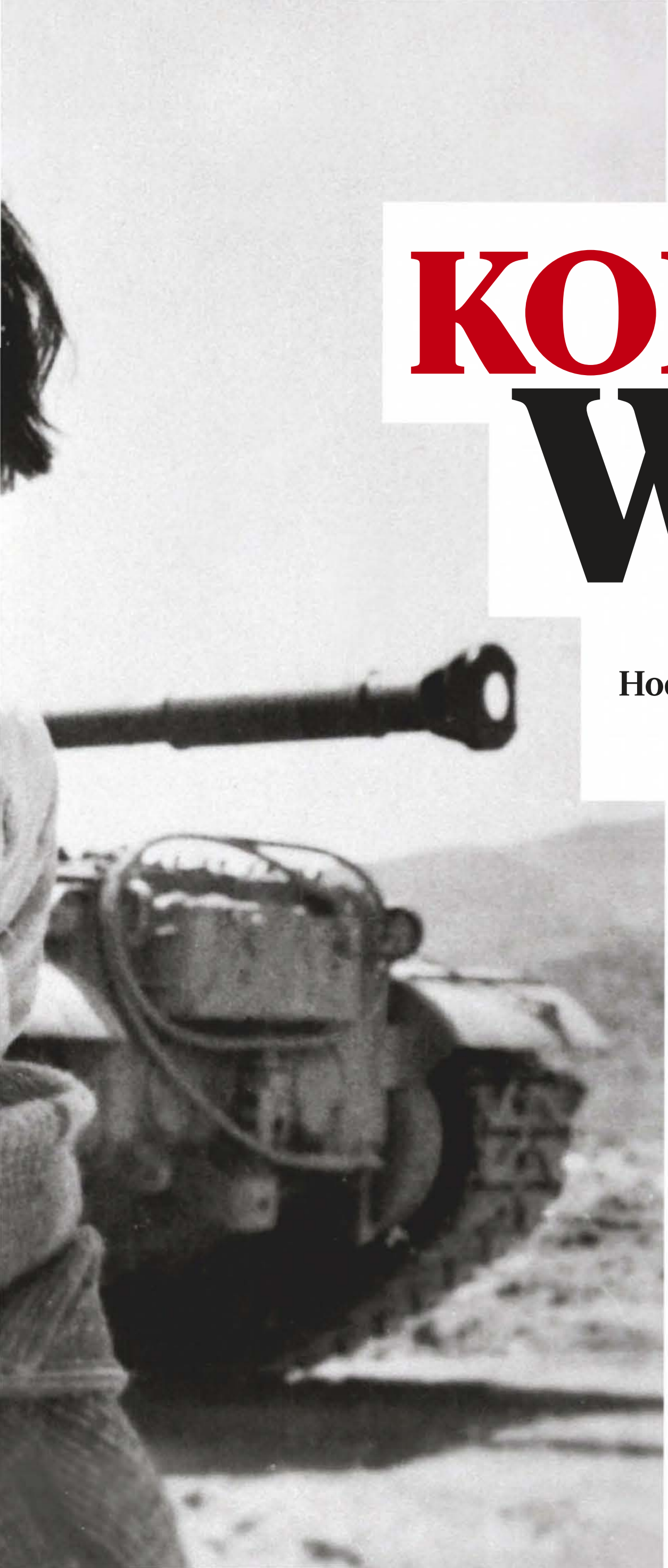
▼ Carrying her baby brother on her back, a war-weary Korean girl walks by a stalled M-26 tank at Haengju in South Korea, in June 1951



THE KOREAN WAR

Seventy years on, **Charlotte Hodgman** explores images of the bloody conflict that engulfed the Korean peninsula

On 25 June 1950, just five years after the end of World War II, global peace was placed in jeopardy once again, when the Republic of Korea (commonly known as South Korea) was invaded from the north by over 100,000 troops from the Korean Peoples' Army. The ensuing conflict was the Cold War's first military action.

The East Asian nation of Korea had been a Japanese colony since 1910, but was divided into two occupational zones at the 38th Parallel following Japan's unconditional surrender at the end of World War II. The North was subsequently occupied by Soviet Russia, while the South fell under US military administration.

Border skirmishes were common, with both governments claiming sovereignty of the entire Korean peninsula. Despite escalating tensions between the two fledgling states, the invasion of South Korea took the US by complete surprise. The well equipped North Korean army poured across the border, overwhelming the South Korean military, which, in comparison was woefully unprepared for such an invasion.

As the summer drew on, the US and various other UN member states sent military assistance to help drive back North Korean forces. But on 25 October, as fighting reached the Korean Chinese border, China entered the fray in defence of its communist neighbour.

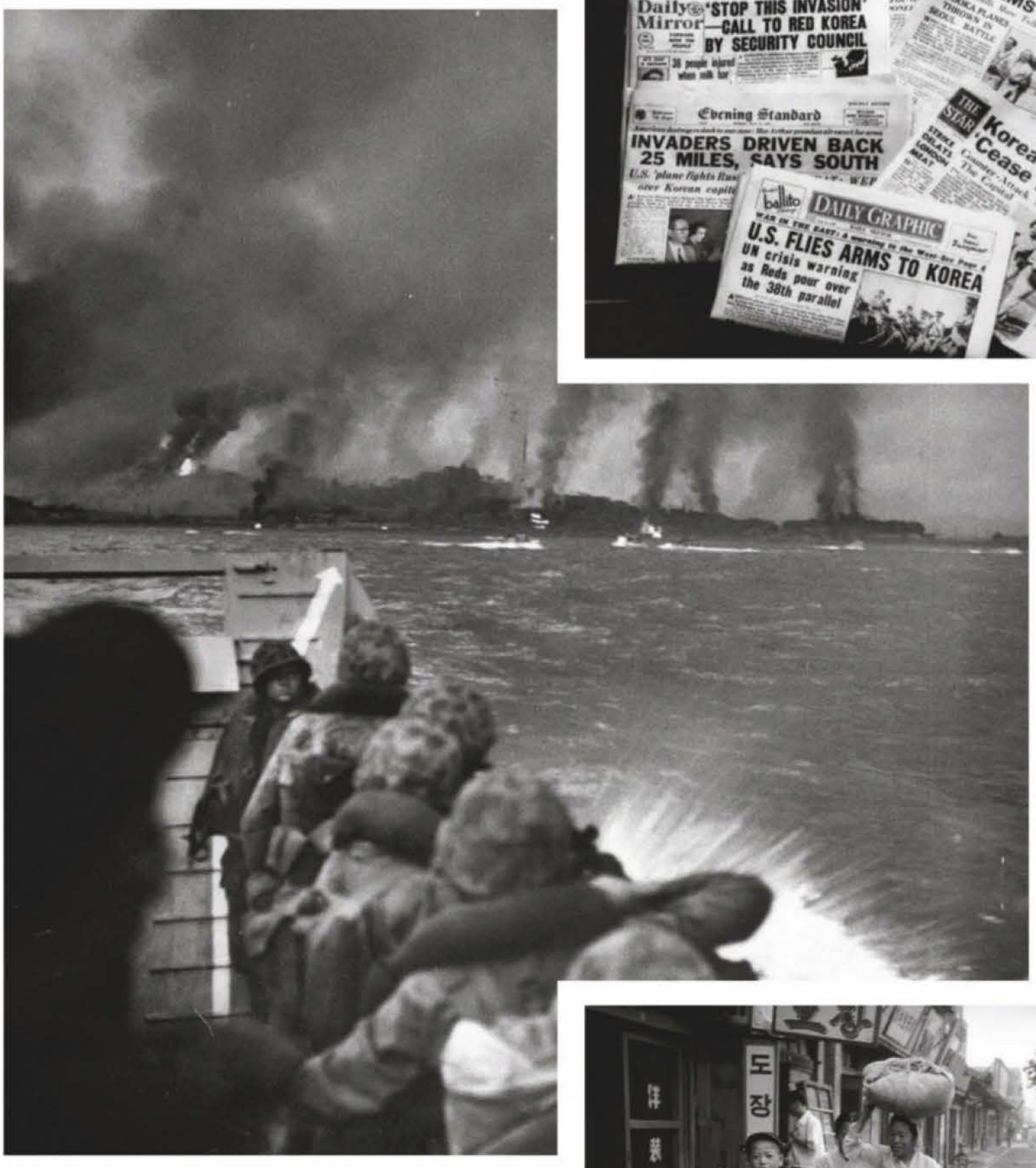
The next two and a half years of fighting caused untold misery and bloodshed on both sides, while behind the scenes, armistice talks failed to come to fruition. Although the true cost of life can never be known, it's thought that more than three million people died in the conflict prior to an armistice on 27 July 1953, including as many as two million civilians.

GETTY IMAGES

JUN 1950: HEADLINE NEWS

▶ British and US newspapers announce the North Korean invasion, hinting at the fighting that was soon to come.

DAILY HERALD
Korea: America rushes arms
NEWS CHRONICLE
KOREA: U.N. ORDERS "CEASE FIRE"
DAILY EXPRESS
WAR ON 38th PARALLEL
Daily Mail
UNITED NATIONS ORDER:
Daily Mirror
'STOP THIS INVASION'—CALL TO RED KOREA BY SECURITY COUNCIL
U.S. ARMS READY FOR KOREA
The Evening News
Evening Standard
INVADERS DRIVEN BACK 25 MILES, SAYS SOUTH
THE STAR
Korea Reds Ignore 'Cease Fire' Order
DAILY GRAPHIC
U.S. FLIES ARMS TO KOREA
UN crisis warning as Reds pour over the 38th parallel



SEP 1950: INTO THE BREACH

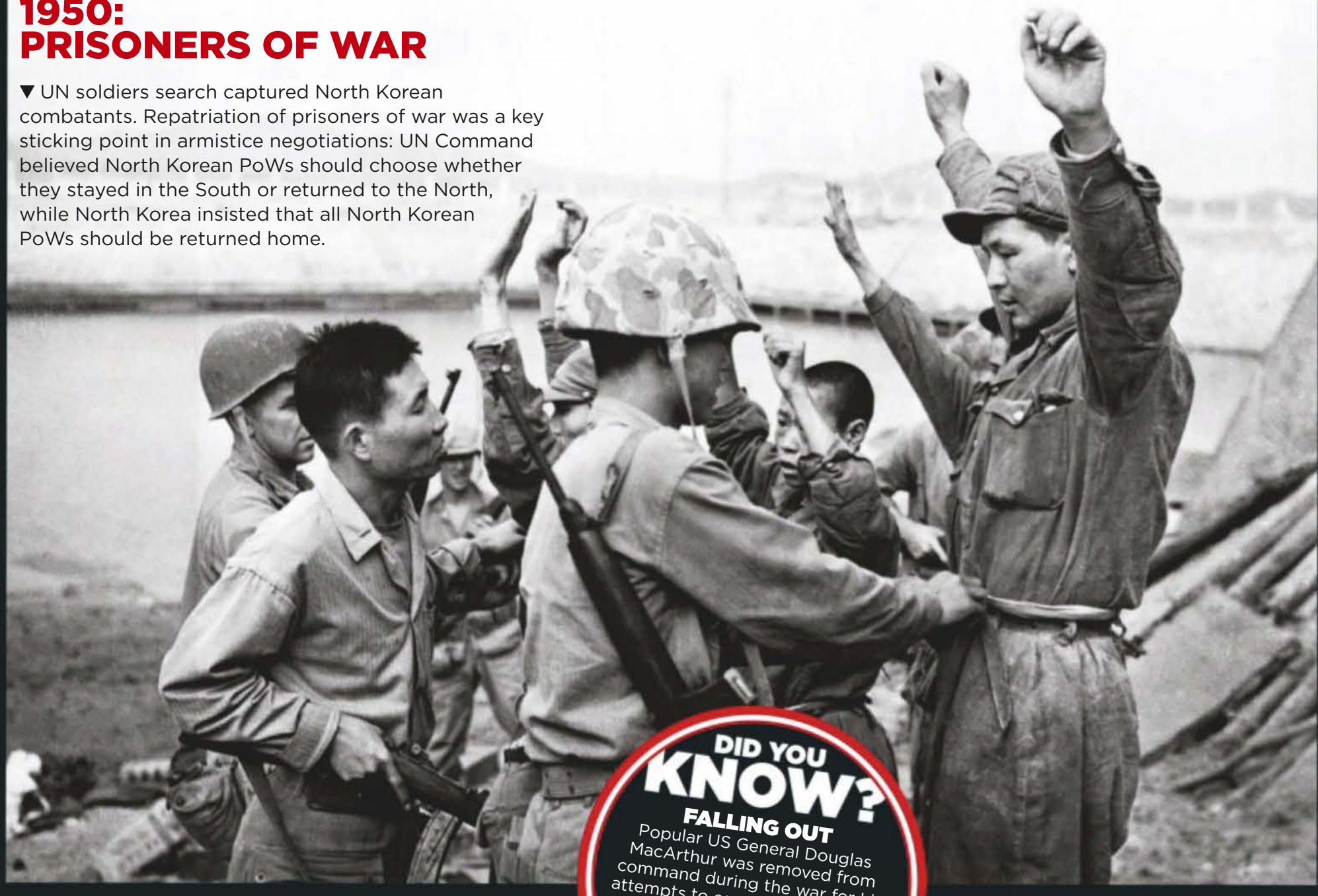
◀ US Marines aboard a landing craft head towards the beaches of Incheon, on the west coast of South Korea – still smoking from heavy naval shelling – during Allied amphibious landing operations. Up to 50,000 UN troops landed at Incheon and by the end of September the UN had retaken Seoul from the North Korean forces.

1950: THE JOURNEY SOUTH

▶ Korean refugees flee their homes with just a few possessions after North Korean troops cross the 38th Parallel. Many refugees headed south in search of safety. By early 1951, Busan, South Korea's southernmost major city, was home to around a half million refugees, on top of its existing population.

1950: PRISONERS OF WAR

▼ UN soldiers search captured North Korean combatants. Repatriation of prisoners of war was a key sticking point in armistice negotiations: UN Command believed North Korean PoWs should choose whether they stayed in the South or returned to the North, while North Korea insisted that all North Korean PoWs should be returned home.



DID YOU KNOW?

FALLING OUT

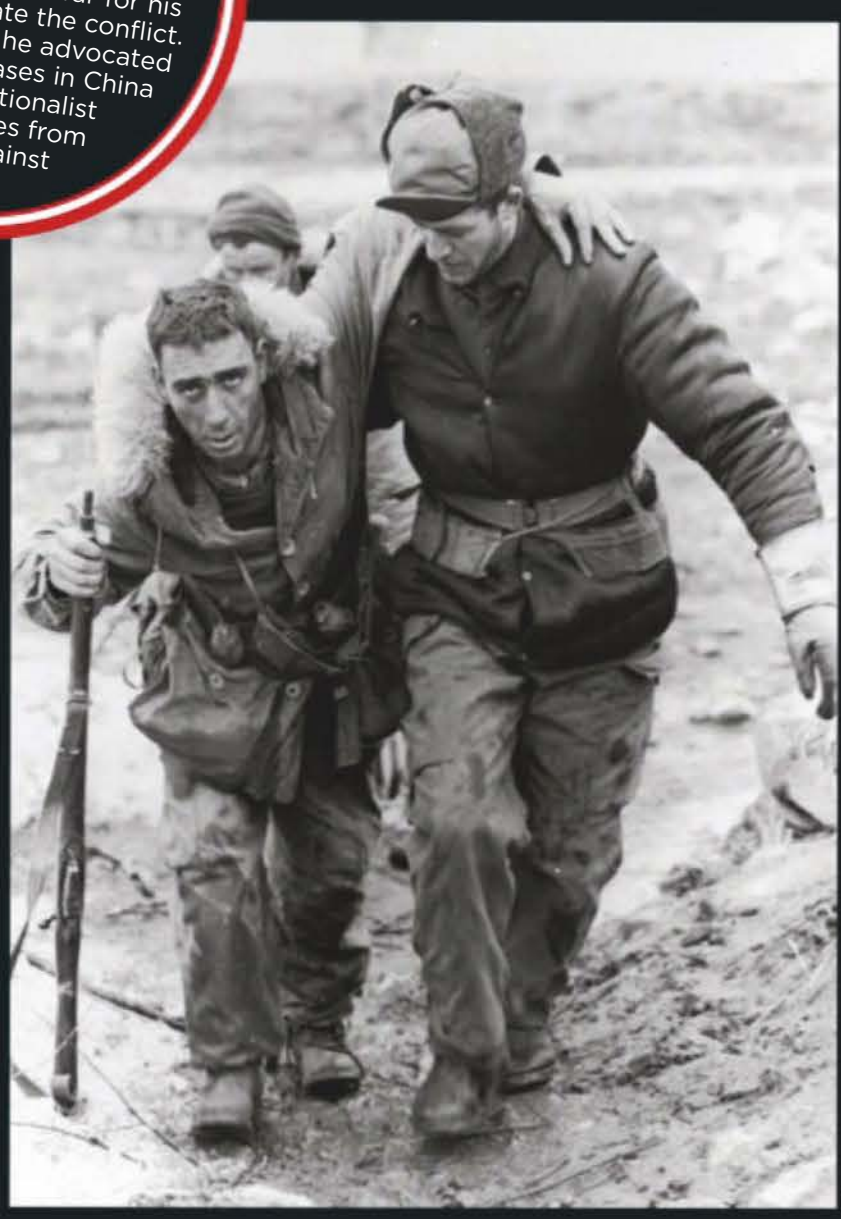
Popular US General Douglas MacArthur was removed from command during the war for his attempts to escalate the conflict. Among measures he advocated were bombing bases in China and using Nationalist Chinese forces from Taiwan against China.

SEP-OCT 1950: WARM WELCOME

▲ Flag-waving residents of Pyongyang greet UN troops as they enter North Korea's capital city. Above them, portraits of Stalin (*left*) and Kim Il-Sung, torn by shell fire, hang precariously from a battered building.

1950: HELPING HANDS

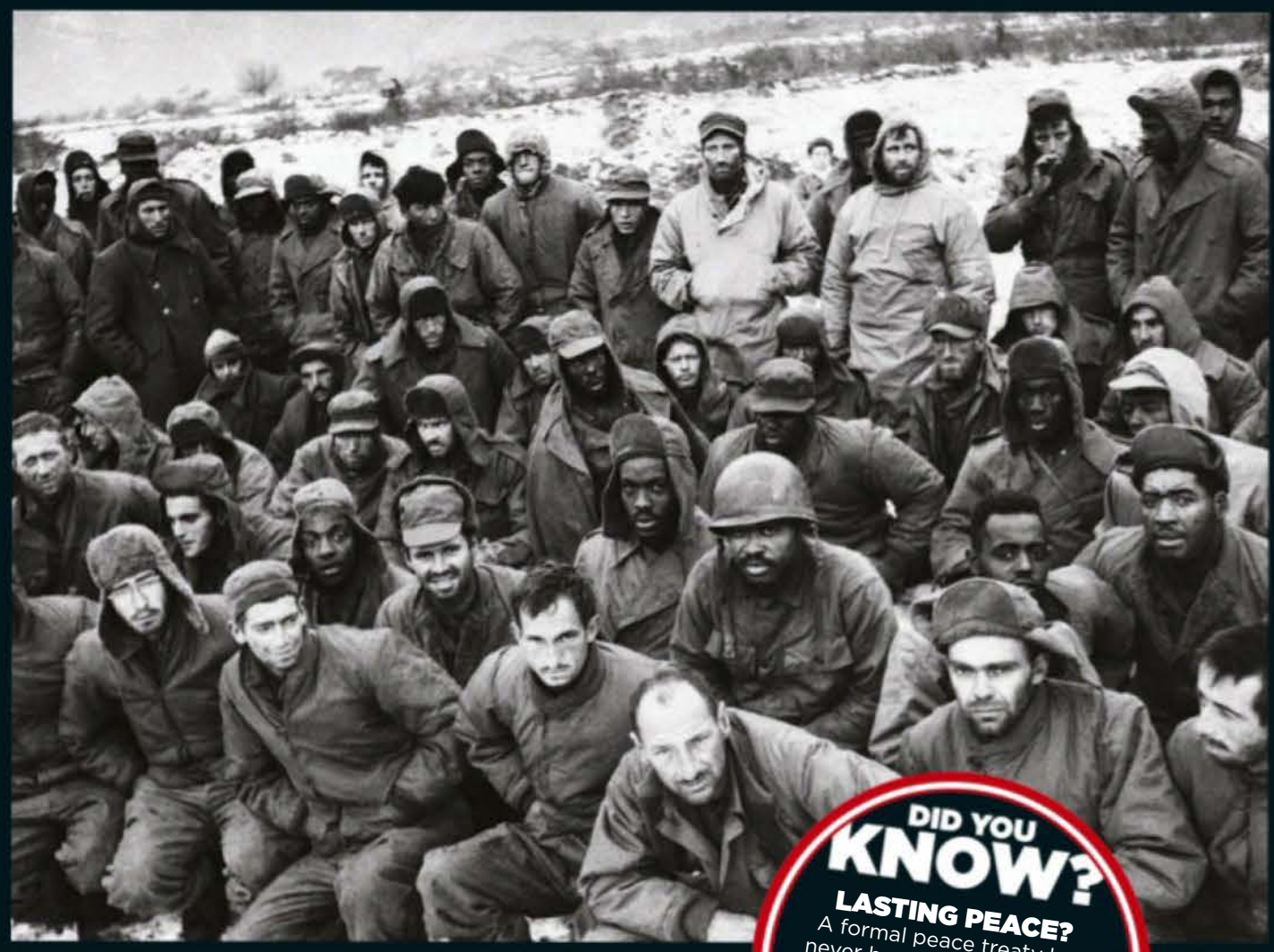
▶ A wounded Canadian rifleman is helped to an aid station behind the front lines. More than 26,000 Canadians served as part of the UN taskforce, after the Canadian Army Special Force was established in August 1950.



GETTY IMAGES X6

JAN 1951: LONG WAY FROM HOME

▶ US soldiers are photographed after being captured by Chinese communist forces. Captured American troops, some as young as 17, often experienced horrific conditions as PoWs; some 38 per cent of US prisoners died in captivity.



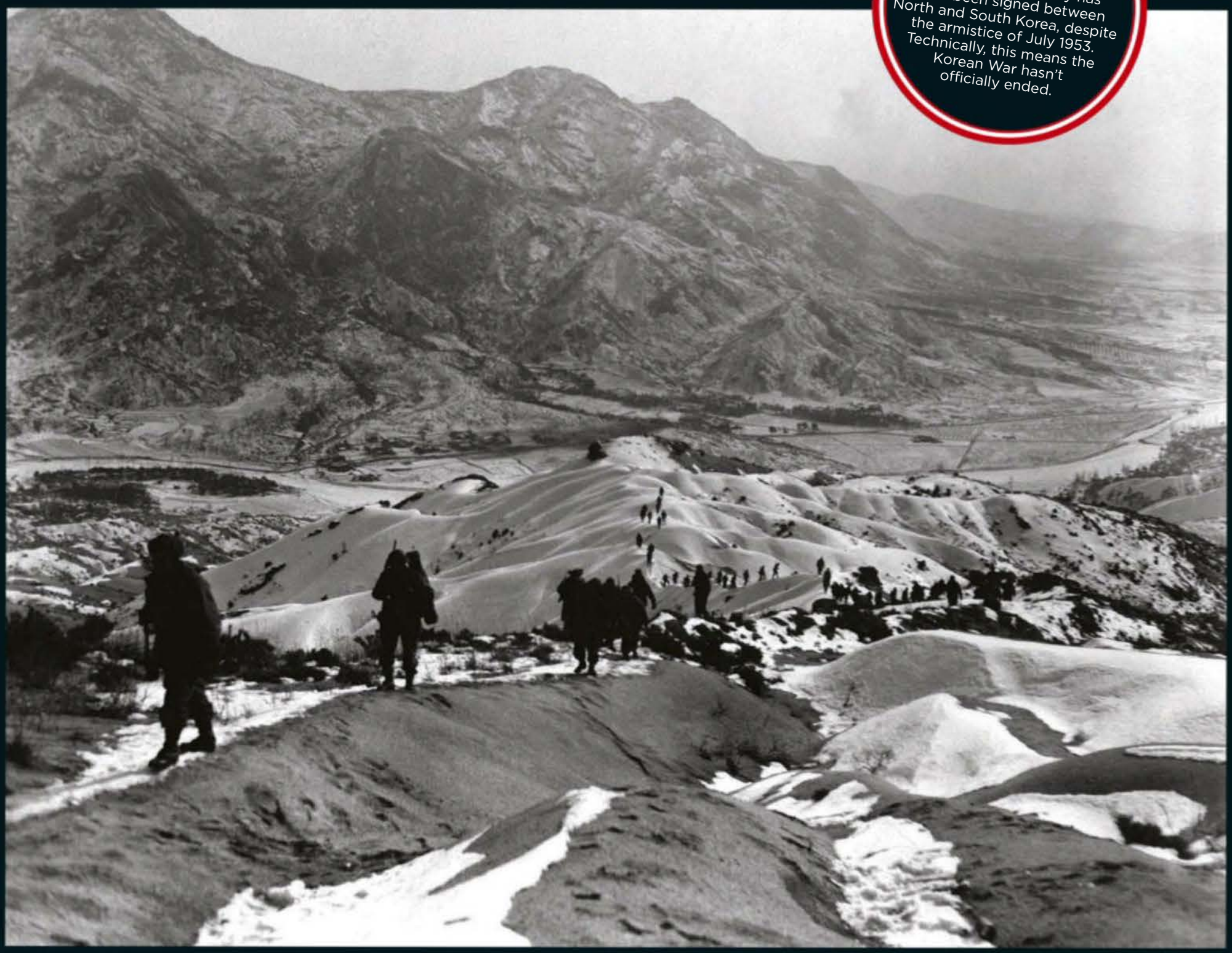
DID YOU KNOW?

LASTING PEACE?

A formal peace treaty has never been signed between North and South Korea, despite the armistice of July 1953. Technically, this means the Korean War hasn't officially ended.

JAN 1951: BRAVING THE CONDITIONS

▼ Soldiers of the US 19th Infantry Regiment work their way over snowy mountains to locate the enemy lines about ten miles north of Seoul, South Korea. Soldiers often suffered from frozen rations, icy terrain, jammed weapons, and a shortage of cold weather gear.



APR-MAY 1951: UNDER FIRE

▶ US Marines launch a 4.5-inch rocket barrage against Chinese communists during the First Spring Offensive, launched by Chinese Communist Forces in April 1951 with the aim of driving the US Eighth Army from the Korean Peninsula for good.

MAR 1952: RIVER CROSSING

▼ The 84th Engineer Construction Battalion builds the Freedom Gate Bridge, spanning the Imjin River. The structure temporarily replaced the original bridge (*to the left of the image*) which had been destroyed by bombing.

MAR 1951: FALLING FROM THE SKY

▼ Codenamed Operation Tomahawk. 3,437 paratroopers of the 187th Team and 12 officers and men of the 60th Indian Parachute Field Ambulance are dropped near Munsan-ni in the second largest airborne operation of the war.

GETTY IMAGES X5

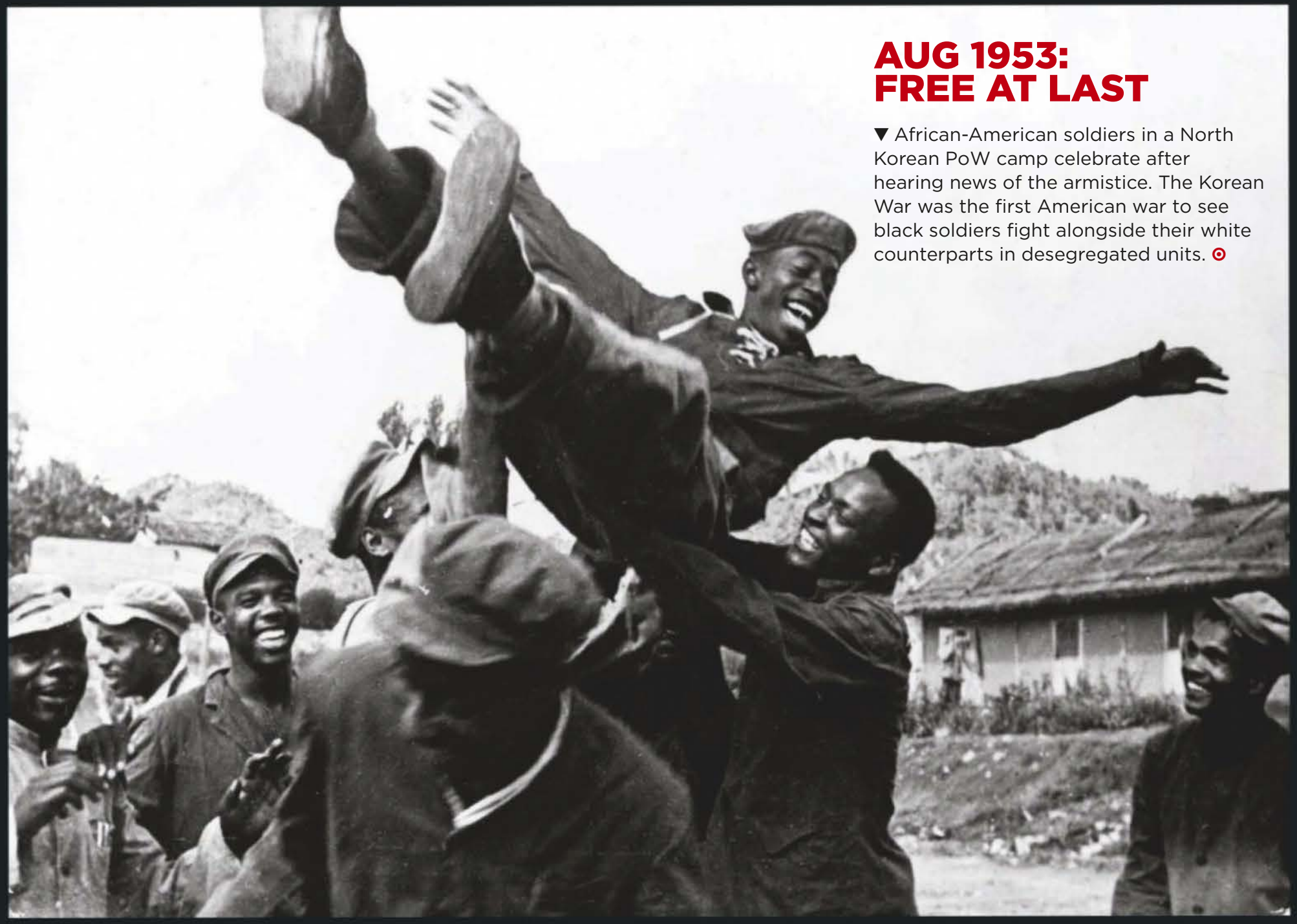
JUL 1953: UNEASY TRUCE

◀ After two years of negotiations, North Korea's Kim Il-Sung (*far left*), signs the Korean Armistice Agreement in Pyongyang. The document stated that it was aimed at a ceasefire "until a final peaceful settlement is achieved". But a conference in Geneva in 1954, designed to thrash out a formal peace accord, ended without agreement.

GET HOOKED

LISTEN

Listen to *Korea Divided: A Bitter History* on the BBC World Service. *bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswqll*



AUG 1953: FREE AT LAST

▼ African-American soldiers in a North Korean PoW camp celebrate after hearing news of the armistice. The Korean War was the first American war to see black soldiers fight alongside their white counterparts in desegregated units.

GETTY IMAGES X2

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WHAT IF... HENRY VIII'S FIRST SON HAD LIVED?

Jonny Wilkes talks to **Tracy Borman** about the seismic changes in English history that may not have happened if Catherine of Aragon had given Henry what he most wanted – a living male heir

Within two months of coming to the throne in 1509, the young King Henry VIII had married Catherine of Aragon, and within two years he had a son and heir. Catherine the beautiful, intelligent and accomplished princess from Spain, and widow of Henry's older brother, Arthur had lost her first child, a daughter delivered stillborn, in 1510. But she quickly fell pregnant again, and on New Year's Day 1511 she gave birth to a boy at Richmond Palace.

There were bonfires in the capital, free flowing wine, banquets, and Henry held a jousting tournament as England rejoiced over the news. The child, christened Henry, served to secure the Tudor dynasty, and Catherine had earned her choice of image for her heraldic badge: the pomegranate, a symbol of fertility. Alas, the joy was not to last, and the little prince died just seven weeks later. Yet had he survived, then history would have turned out very differently.

"There wouldn't have been six wives for a start," says author and historian Tracy Borman. Henry would have had no cause to seek a separation from Catherine, and while he may still have tired of his wife over the years and had his head turned by other women, Borman believes his relationship with Anne Boleyn was unlikely to have started at all. "I don't think Anne would have had the same appeal for Henry," she says. "He only became obsessed with her when she refused to sleep with him and, crucially, held out the promise of a son if he set aside Catherine."

"HENRY SAW HIMSELF AS A WARRIOR KING... HE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE SPENT MOST OF HIS REIGN WAGING WAR"

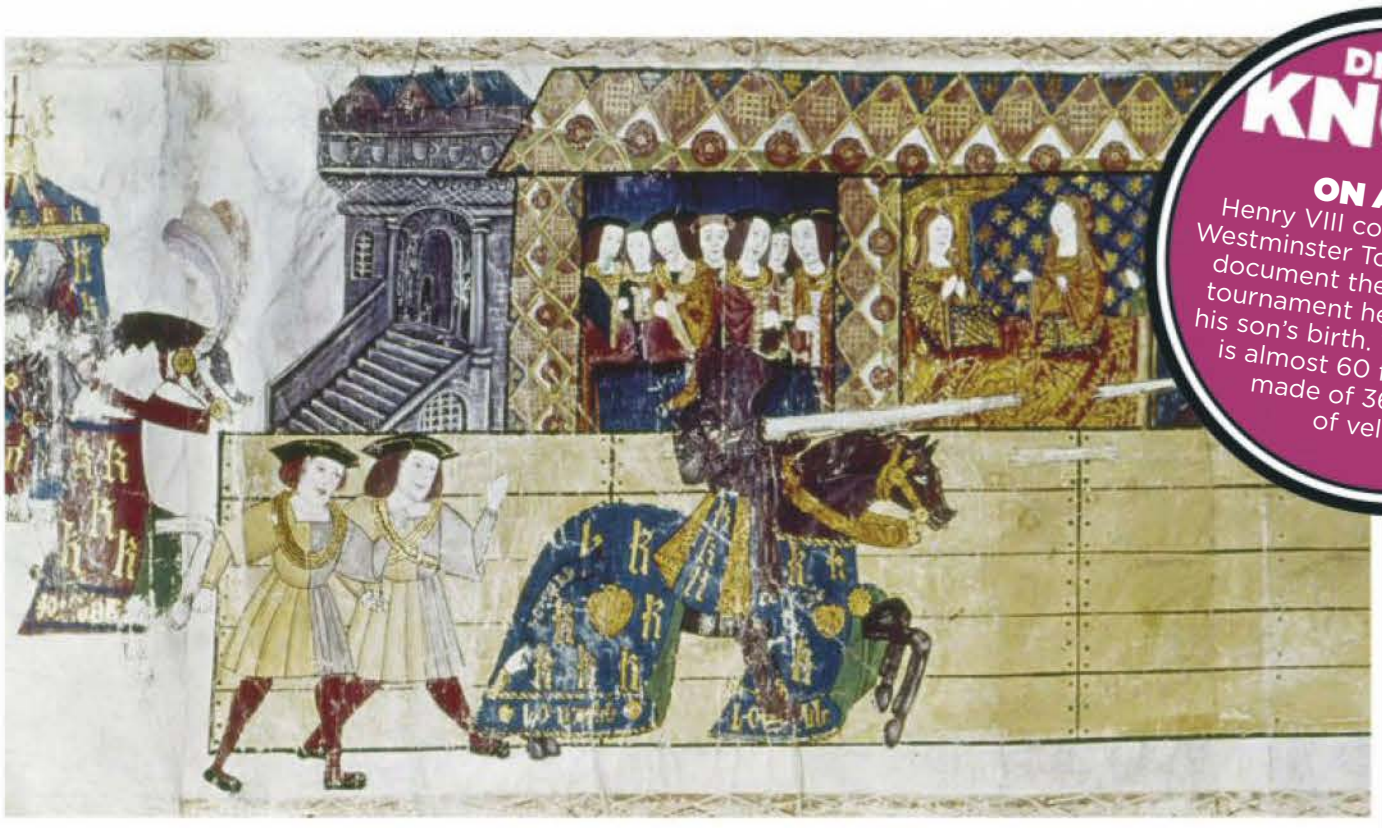
NO DIVORCE, NO PROBLEM

Far more significantly, there would have been no conflict between Henry and the papacy over his desire to have his marriage to Catherine annulled. That would have meant no split from Rome, no establishment of the Church of England with Henry as its Supreme Head, and perhaps no English Reformation at all. While reformist thinking was still emerging in England, which Henry or his advisers may have embraced, Borman stresses that any change would not have been as sudden or all encompassing without the king's fixation on Anne and having a son.

"England would probably have remained loyal to Rome," says Borman, and the monasteries wouldn't have been dissolved.

Even if Thomas Cromwell had still risen to be Henry's chief minister, he would have had no sweeping reformation in England's religious and political life to oversee. "Cromwell was a genuine reformer," says Borman, "but he simply didn't have the power to persuade Henry to go down that path unless there was something in it for the king."

Instead, Henry might have spent his reign focusing on his true ambitions: battle and conquest. "Henry saw himself



DID YOU KNOW?

ON A ROLL

Henry VIII commissioned the Westminster Tournament Roll to document the lavish jousting tournament held to celebrate his son's birth. The painted roll is almost 60 feet long and made of 36 sections of vellum.

The Westminster Tournament Roll, featuring Henry VIII astride his horse with joust in hand as Catherine of Aragon watches on

ALAMY X1, GETTY IMAGES X3

Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, painted c1520. Had their son lived, the king may have retained some of the joy of his youth

as a warrior king in the mould of his medieval ancestors. He would probably have spent most of his reign waging war on France, Scotland and elsewhere."

So, instead of seizing the wealth of the church by dissolving the monasteries, Henry would likely have risked exhausting the royal treasury and "to little effect", as Borman puts it. His endless military campaigns might have risked England's position in Europe, too. Borman says: "England would still have been under threat from the might of France and Spain, but less so given that they remained ideologically aligned." Marriage alliances might have strengthened relations with the rest of Catholic Europe. All the while, Catherine would have ruled as regent, proving a capable leader if the rousing speech she is said to have given before the Battle of Flodden in 1513 after the Scots invaded England as Henry fought in France was anything to go by.

PRINCELY PURSUITS

As for the young son, Prince Henry, Catherine would have ensured he had a Catholic upbringing and that his preparation to sit on the throne began at an early age. Made the Duke of Cornwall while still a baby, his childhood would have been spent in a separate, luxurious household receiving an exemplary education. Young Henry not subjected to the paranoia about his safety that later surrounded Edward VI could have had knightly training, too, as his parents would have had reason to be confident of more boys being born.

Each male child would have added to Henry's sense of ease concerning the future of his dynasty as they made useful "spares", says Borman. "It's likely one of them would have been destined for a career in the church, as Henry himself was believed to have been when he was the spare heir." And any girls that Henry and Catherine had including Mary in 1516, no longer destined to rule would have been married off to help build foreign alliances.

The House of Tudor would have been safe, in Henry's eyes. But by securing an heir early in his reign, Henry might have, paradoxically, hurt his dynasty's historical legacy. "Two of the things that make the Tudors so famous and compelling are the king who married six times and his daughter Elizabeth who reigned as the 'Virgin Queen'," says Borman. Without the seismic events of Henry's rule, the religious upheaval and the reigns of his children, the Tudors may not be as well remembered today.

As for Henry himself, it is intriguing to ask whether he would have become the overweight, foul tempered king of the history books if he had sired a living boy earlier. "He might have remained the pleasure loving prince he was when he ascended the throne," says Borman. "If he had still had his jousting accident in 1536, then he would have still gained weight and been in pain, but he wouldn't have been plagued by the deep seated insecurity that sprang from almost 30 years of trying and failing to father a living, legitimate son."

LISTEN

Find out what kind of father Henry VIII might have been in BBC Radio 4 Extra's *The Art of Monarchy*.
bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00nhbsm

READ

Tracy Borman's books include *Henry VIII and the Men Who Made Him* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018)

NEXT MONTH

What if... Abraham Lincoln hadn't been assassinated?

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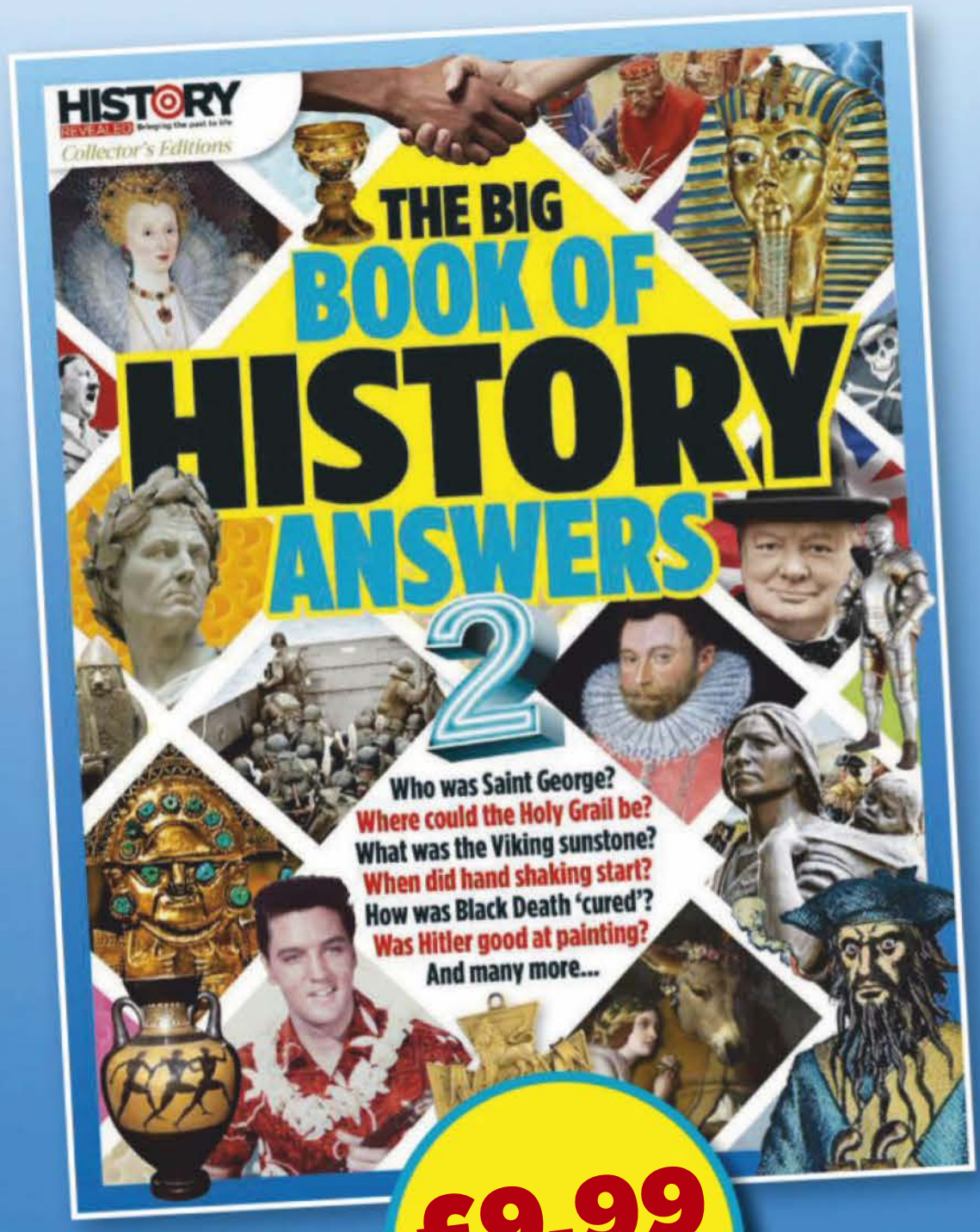

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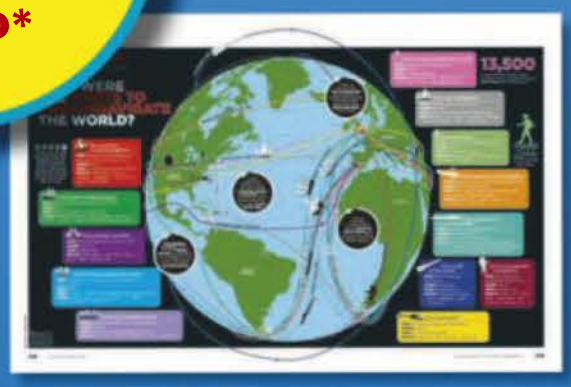

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HE'S NOT HORSING AROUND
Genghis Khan was determined to keep his burial place hidden – but he is remembered in this monument in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

£52,257

The amount bequeathed to the National Gallery of Scotland by James Cowan Smith in 1919, as long as they displayed a portrait of his pooch Callum in perpetuity.

Where is Genghis Khan buried?

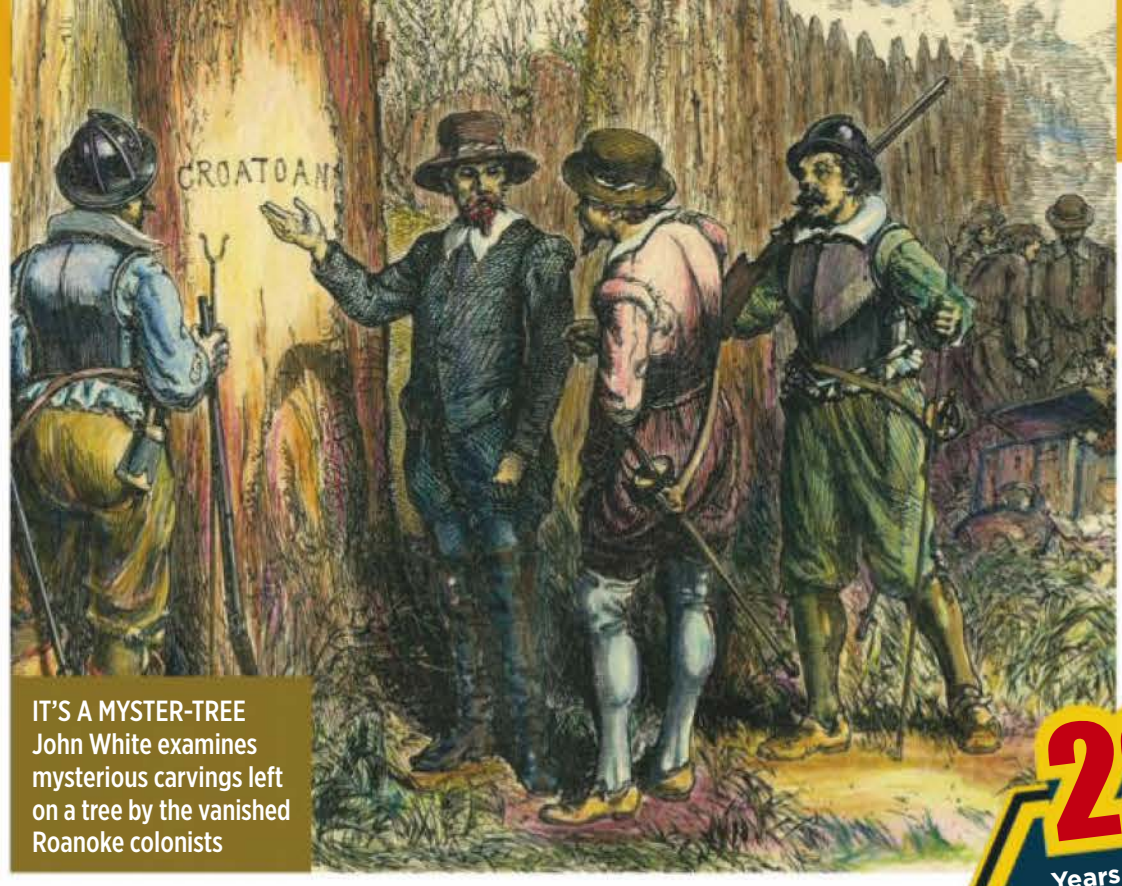
SHORT ANSWER In Mongolia, in the ground, but that's all we know, as the great khan made sure he would rest in peace

LONG ANSWER The hunt for the tomb of Genghis Khan – founder of the Mongol Empire, which stretched from China to Europe – is still being conducted in the vast landscape of Mongolia. It's mainly foreign archaeologists doing the searching, though, as Mongolians generally wish to respect their national hero by leaving him undisturbed, as per his instructions.

When Genghis Khan died on 18 August 1227, while on yet another military campaign in China, his body was brought back to his homeland for burial. The fearsome fighter had denied millions upon millions of people respect after death, as he had a proclivity for building pyramids from the skulls of those his forces had defeated and captured. But he ensured that he, at least, would rest in peace. Keeping to Mongol tradition, Genghis Khan reportedly went to extreme measures to be buried in a place with no markings.

According to legend, the soldiers of the funeral procession murdered everyone they passed, the slaves who built the tomb and then themselves. There have even been claims that a river was diverted in order to sink the tomb, or that 1,000 horses trampled over the ground to remove all evidence of what lay beneath.

GETTY IMAGES



IT'S A MYSTER-TREE John White examines mysterious carvings left on a tree by the vanished Roanoke colonists

What happened to the Roanoke colonists?

SHORT ANSWER We still can't definitively say what happened, or what the cryptic clues they left could mean

LONG ANSWER The Roanoke colony was founded in 1585 by Sir Walter Raleigh as the first permanent English settlement in the New World. But the island off the eastern coast of present day North Carolina became the location of one of history's greatest unsolved mysteries.

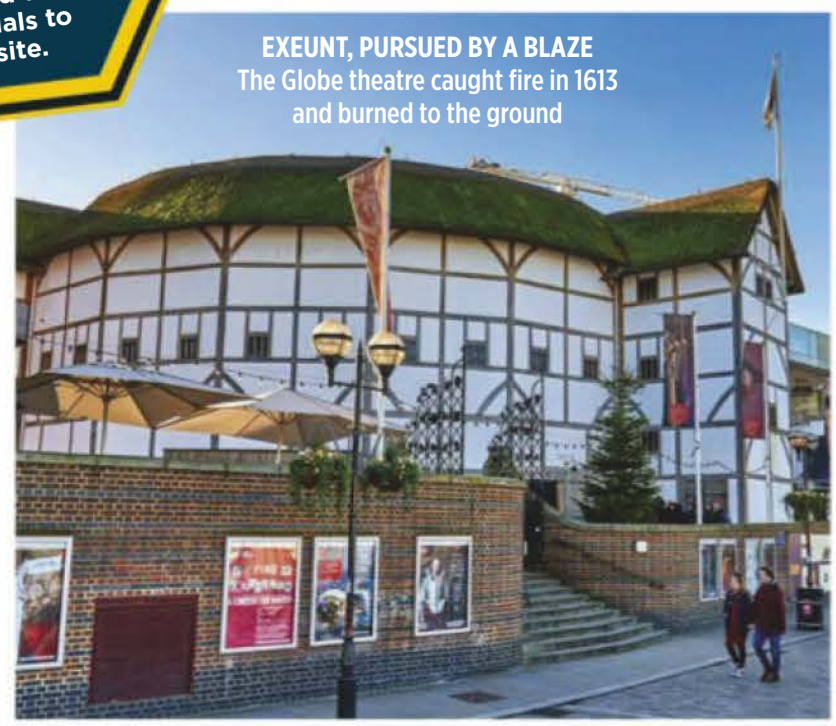
In 1587, John White the governor of the failing colony travelled to London to plead for assistance. Yet when he returned in 1590, the 117 colonists had vanished – including his wife, daughter and granddaughter. The only clue was the word 'Croatoan' and letters 'CRO' carved onto trees. Were they attacked by native warriors, had they given up and tried to sail to England, or had they simply relocated? Croatoan Island (now part of Hatteras), not far away, was home to the Hatteras Indians, so the carvings may imply they left Roanoke in search of that tribe a theory supported by the discovery of European artefacts there.

22 Years it took around 20,000 workers to build the Taj Mahal and its grounds. More than 1,000 elephants were used to lug materials to the site.

How did the Globe Theatre burn down?

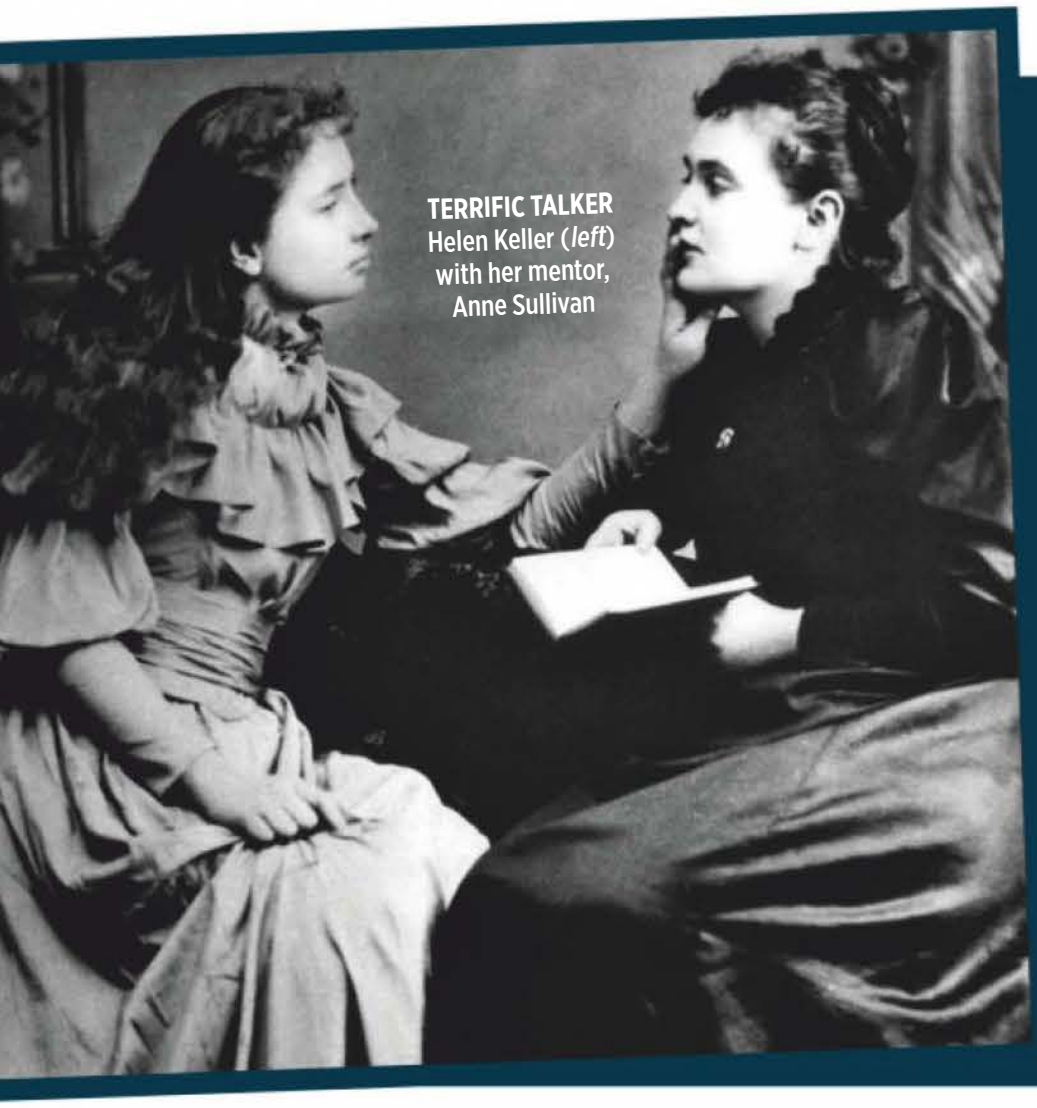
SHORT ANSWER Shakespeare's latest play went off with a bang, literally

LONG ANSWER On 29 June 1613, a fiery performance took place at the Globe Theatre in London, although no one stuck around to see it. William Shakespeare was putting on *All is True* (better known today as *Henry VIII*), a play he'd written with John Fletcher, during which stage cannons were fired to mark Henry's entrance. One misfired, however, and sent a flaming fragment of material up to the Globe's thatched roof. It took just over an hour to reduce the building where many of the Bard's plays debuted to ashes. No one was hurt, but a man's trousers did catch fire and had to be doused with a flagon of ale. The Globe was rebuilt in 1614, only to be closed in 1642 by the theatre hating Puritans.



EXEUNT, PURSUED BY A BLAZE The Globe theatre caught fire in 1613 and burned to the ground

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X2



TERRIFIC TALKER Helen Keller (*left*) with her mentor, Anne Sullivan

How did Helen Keller communicate?

SHORT ANSWER The deafblind girl began her remarkable education thanks to her teacher, Anne Sullivan, and a water pump

LONG ANSWER When an American girl named Helen Keller was 19 months old, she contracted a mystery illness that left her deaf and blind. Her parents sent for help, and in 1887 they received a miracle in 20-year-old teacher Anne Sullivan, a star graduate of the Perkins School for the Blind. Sullivan, herself coping with sight issues, persevered through Keller's outbursts of fear and frustration until she made a breakthrough. She took the seven-year-old Keller to the water pump and ran the water over one of her pupil's hands, while writing out the word in her other palm. Finally, the young girl fully grasped what her teacher was trying to do, and she couldn't get enough. By the end of the day, Keller had learned 30 words.

She went on to read raised type, converse with others by placing her fingers on the speaker's lips and even speak. From there, Keller became a prolific author, speaker and figurehead for disabled people – proving she didn't need sight to have vision.

RIGHTEOUS RITUAL
Samurai would slice into their own bellies (*left*) with short blades (*right*) to die with honour

What did seppuku entail?

SHORT ANSWER **To keep their honour, samurai violently took their own lives by slicing open their bellies – all without showing a hint of pain**

LONG ANSWER The word *seppuku* means 'self-disembowelment', while its other name, *hara-kiri*, means 'belly cutting'. It was a rite that was reserved for the samurai, used for centuries in feudal Japan and which developed into a rigidly ritualistic ceremony.

A samurai wishing to die with honour would bathe, dress in white robes, drink a cup of sake and write a death poem. Then, as spectators looked on, he would draw a short sword and plunge the blade into the left side of his abdomen, before drawing it across his belly and then upward. It was important not to show any emotion during this painful death, as a final demonstration of courage and resolve. Finally, the samurai would either stab themselves in the throat or signal to a trusted accomplice, a *kaishakunin*, to all but behead them, skilfully leaving a flap of skin attaching head and body so that the head fell forwards into the dead man's lap.

Seppuku was carried out after a samurai brought shame to himself, or to show loyalty to his lord in line with their code of Bushidō and it was also used as a capital punishment. Japanese women had their own specific ritual for ending their lives, known as *jigai*, which involved slitting their own throats.

DID YOU KNOW?

PERSECUTED POULTRY

In 1474, the people of Basel, Switzerland, mistook a chicken for a rooster and put it on trial for witchcraft after someone witnessed it laying an egg. The bird was found guilty and burned to death.

THAT SUCKS!

American physician Jesse William Lazear was studying yellow fever when, in 1900, he looked to prove the disease was spread by mosquitoes by deliberately letting one bite him. He was right: he died of yellow fever.

SWEATY SKINCARE

Gladiators in Ancient Rome were treated like today's sporting celebrities, so much so that their bodily fluids became sought-after souvenirs. Sweat collected from gladiators was used for skincare or as an aphrodisiac.

FRESH FROM THE (BEETH)OVEN

Beethoven finished his *Violin Concerto in D major* just two days before its premiere on 23 December 1806. The soloist, Franz Clement, had no time to learn the music and had to sight-read some of the performance.

Was Phileas Fogg based on a real person?

SHORT ANSWER **Two American adventurers and a travel poster are all in the running for inspiring Jules Verne**

LONG ANSWER "I'm Phileas Fogg!" So said George Francis Train following the 1872 serial publication of *Around the World in Eighty Days*. The US entrepreneur believed his 80-day around-the-world trip in 1870 had inspired Jules Verne's character. But another American adventurer – William Perry Fogg – also fits the bill. Fogg traversed the globe in 1868 and published letters from his journey in *The Cleveland Leader*. Verne may even have been inspired by a simple travel poster for Thomas Cook. Improved transportation had made the thought of circling the world a much more realistic prospect in the second half of the 19th century, so the idea of completing a circumnavigation in a set time predated Verne's eccentric Englishman Phileas Fogg.

UP, UP AND AWAY!
Cantinflas and David Niven star in 1956's *Around the World in 80 Days*

Why is it called a flea market?

SHORT ANSWER **Did all the second-hand items for sale have fleas? Well, one person seemed to think so**

LONG ANSWER This one is a bit of a headscratcher – don't worry, the little bloodsuckers aren't to blame. The term is thought to have sprung up in 1860s Paris, supposedly after one unhappy browser grew so unimpressed at the well-worn, second-hand items for sale at the bazaar that he labelled the place 'marché aux puces' (market of fleas). That explanation was good enough for the Oxford English Dictionary in 1922. Another origin, also from Paris, may be that when the city got an architectural facelift, the outdoor markets had to change locations and so became 'flee markets'.

ALAMY X3, GETTY IMAGES X1

NOT-SO-SPECIALS BOARD
One mouldy sandwich was 'served' to every patron with their drink, and it sometimes did the rounds for weeks

What was the Raines Sandwich?

SHORT ANSWER A legal loophole that meant New Yorkers could drink alcohol on Sundays with a 'meal'

LONG ANSWER In 1896, the state of New York passed the Raines Law to curb what its author, John Raines, saw as excessive drinking. The law raised the yearly liquor licence fees and drinking age, forbade bars from opening near schools or churches and banned the sale of booze on Sundays.

One problem: hotels were exempt causing bars and saloons to convert any spare spaces into rooms as long as they served food. To take advantage of this loophole, the Raines Sandwich was made. Essentially, it was one sandwich, but served time and again with every drink to satisfy the law. Each sandwich jumped from table to table for weeks.

Playwright Eugene O'Neill described them as "an old, desiccated ruin of dust laden bread and mummified ham or cheese". Some places went further and made a fake sandwich out of rubber, and New Yorkers were happy to play along so that they could quench their thirst.

245

The length, in metres, of the airship *Hindenburg*, only 24 metres shorter than RMS *Titanic*.

What did a misericord do?

SHORT ANSWER Saved priests from tired legs, gave monks freedom – and killed knights

LONG ANSWER Coming from the Latin word for 'mercy', there is a theme to all the medieval uses for a misericord. The best-known example would be the small shelves found underneath the choir stalls in churches and cathedrals, which permitted older or infirm members of the priesthood to take a break from all the standing during services and lean back, providing a welcome act of mercy for their feet. As these weren't public adornments, their markers could have more fun with their decorations, so they often included humorous carvings. A misericord could also be a room in a monastery where some of the strict rules of monastic life were not enforced, which could be a small mercy for the monks.

Or, a very different kind of mercy, a misericorde (note the 'e') was a distinctive thin blade specially made to slip through the gaps in a suit of armour. It came in handy for putting a wounded knight out of his misery.

SECRET SEATS
Priests could sneakily rest during services

SPLASH THE CASH
On the Buses' Reg Varney takes out £10 from the first ATM, located in a London branch of Barclays

Who invented the ATM?

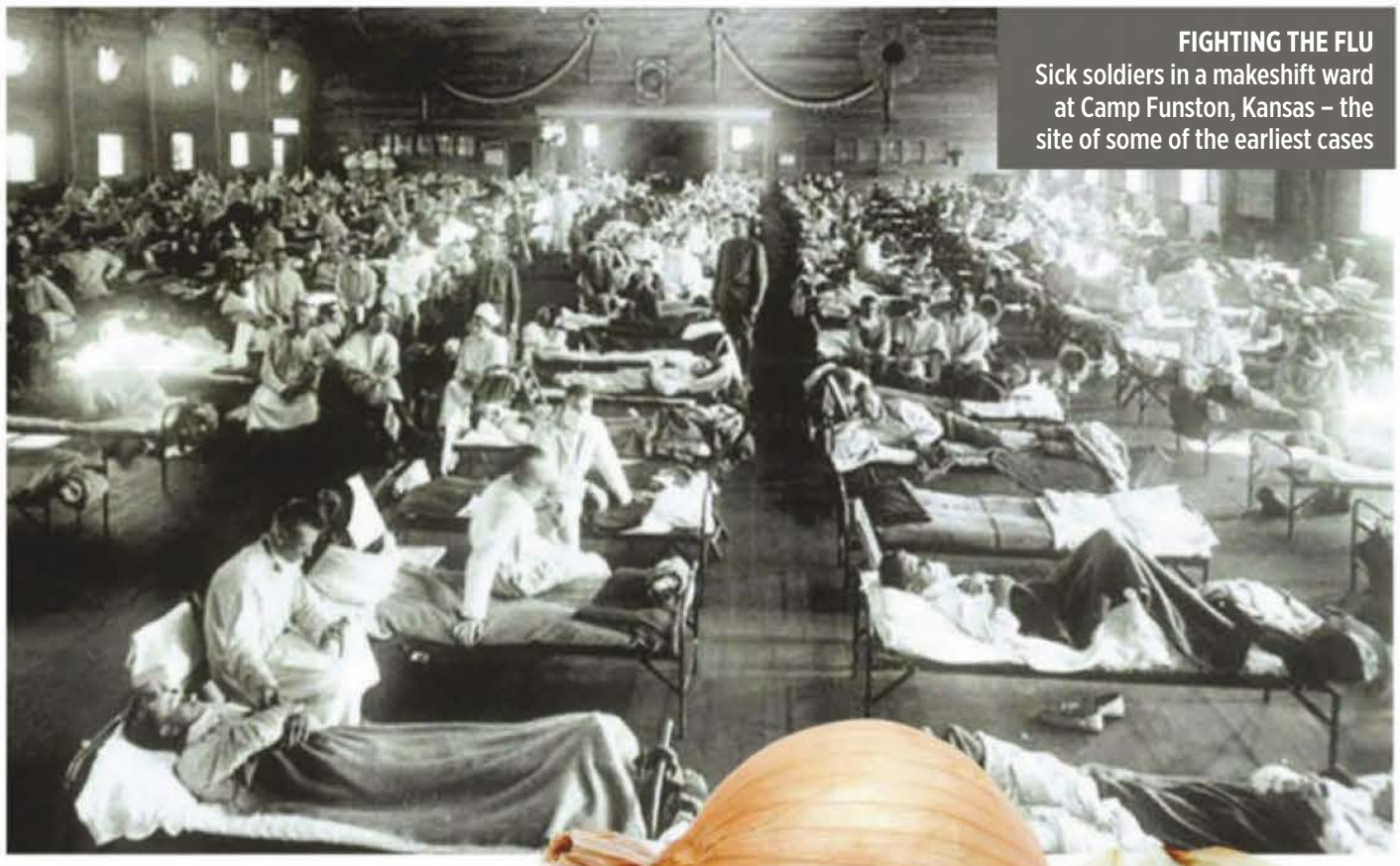
SHORT ANSWER John Shepherd-Barron has been the answer for a while, but don't forget James Goodfellow

LONG ANSWER British inventor John Shepherd-Barron has been given the official credit for inventing the cash machine for years. Like Archimedes, he apparently had a Eureka moment in the bath.

On 27 June 1967, his automated teller machine (ATM), installed at a branch of Barclays in Enfield, London, went into operation. The bank made the most of the publicity by getting Reg Varney, of *On the Buses* fame, to withdraw the first £10. But there's another man who has long been denied recognition for his own cash machine. The Scottish inventor James Goodfellow developed a contraption that's the forerunner of the ATM we use today, as it needed a card and a PIN. Shepherd-Barron's invention used cheques that were imbued with faint traces of radioactivity.

Goodfellow installed his ATM at London branches of Westminster Bank just a month after Reg Varney made his withdrawal. His patents, however – for which he received only $15, or around £10 – had been filed in May 1966.

ALAMY X 2, GETTY IMAGES X2



FIGHTING THE FLU
Sick soldiers in a makeshift ward at Camp Funston, Kansas – the site of some of the earliest cases

What were the folk remedies for Spanish Flu?

SHORT ANSWER Raw onion, kerosene sugar-lumps and sulphur-soaked shoes, to name a few

LONG ANSWER The fast spreading H1N1 influenza A virus, or Spanish Flu, ravaged the world in 1918 19 and killed a conservative estimate of 50 million people. The symptoms ranged from violent coughs, headaches and vomiting, to people's skin turning blue.

While drug companies tried to hawk anything including quinine, chloroform and opium desperate people turned to a host of rudimentary remedies. Raw onion became a favourite, with people either eating them or draping them around their necks or bedposts. In fact, a wide array of herbs and natural materials were said to keep Spanish Flu away, such as the foul smelling asafoetida (gum harvested from giant fennel) or, in South Africa especially, camphor wood. It was feared that fresh air spread the disease, so homes would often be sealed as much as possible, leading to some families nearly suffocating.

People downed unappetising cocktails of salt water and coal oil, or ate sugar lumps with a drop of kerosene. And if a person didn't trust any of those remedies, or the official advice, they could try keeping a potato in their pocket, affixing cucumbers to their ankles or sprinkling sulphur in their shoes.

It should be said: none of these remedies worked, or will have any effect against coronavirus.

What were Leonardo da Vinci's last words?

SHORT ANSWER The Renaissance genius seemingly thought he could have done better than the 'Mona Lisa'

DEATH LOOMS
Francis I of France tends to Leonardo da Vinci

LONG ANSWER We know all about his 'Last Supper', but what of the last words of Leonardo da Vinci? Before dying at Clos Lucé, France, on 2 May 1519, the archetypal 'Renaissance man' seemed unsatisfied with his lifetime of enviable achievement. "I have offended God and mankind, because my work did not reach the quality it should have," he said. It's the perfect self deprecating remark of a true genius if he actually said it. The quote comes from a biography written by Giorgio Vasari, who had a penchant for poetic indulgence. He also made the unlikely claim that Leonardo died in the company of his friend and patron, King Francis I of France.

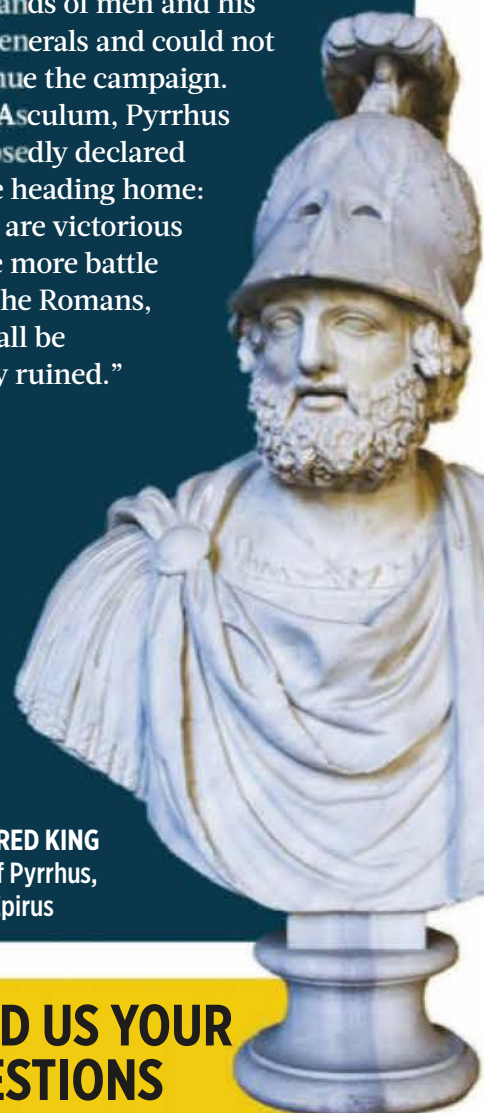
Why do we say a 'pyrrhic' victory?

SHORT ANSWER

The not-really-worth-it type of military victory was named after a king in Ancient Greece

LONG ANSWER King Pyrrhus of the Greek state of Epirus was a gifted military commander, worthy of his relative Alexander the Great. Yet his name is attached to a type of victory that comes at such a high price that it's little better than defeat.

That goes back to his war against Rome. In 280 BC, Pyrrhus led an army of Greeks into Italy and secured victory at Heraclea and again at Asculum the following year. They were strategic successes, but hugely costly – he lost thousands of men and his best generals and could not continue the campaign. After Asculum, Pyrrhus supposedly declared before heading home: "If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined."



CLOBBERED KING
A bust of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus

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ALAMY X1, GETTY IMAGES X3

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Samira Ahmed reads an epic Persian poem called the Shahnameh at Takht-e-Soleyman

ONE TO WATCH

Samira Ahmed gazes at the glorious stained-glass windows of the Pink Mosque in Shiraz. Her new series sees her journeying across Iran to delve into Persia's culture

Culture and conquest

The Art Of Persia / BBC Four, scheduled for June

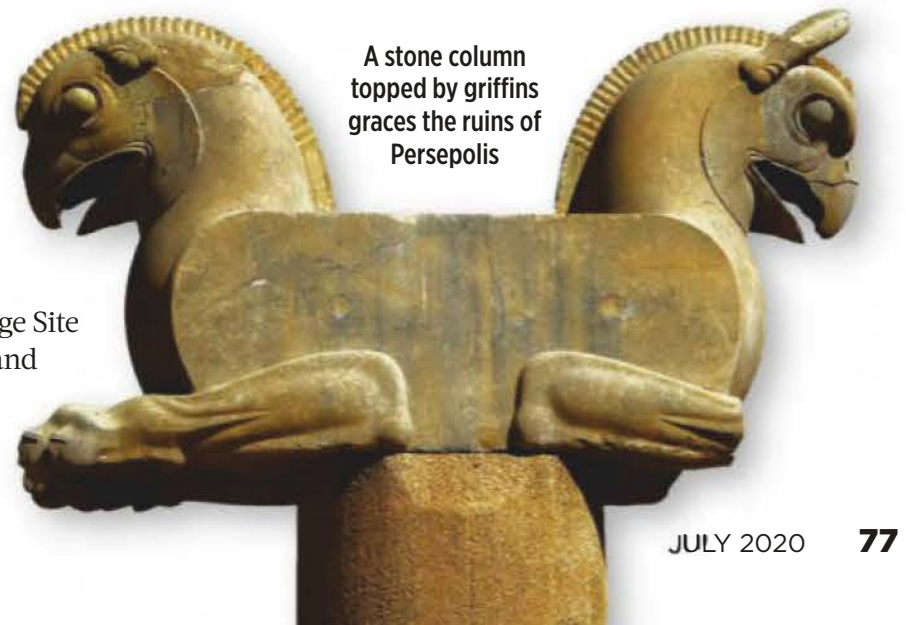
Sometimes, explosive recent history can obscure the ancient past. That's seemingly the case with Iran, which was rocked by the 1979 Iranian Revolution – in part a rebellion against the authoritarian rule of the last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In the years following this revolt, the country's government has forged its own path, isolated from much of the rest of the world.

But look further back, and another story emerges: that of Persia, a name that conjures up mystery and adventure. It's this fascinating history that broadcaster and journalist Samira Ahmed delves into, as she tells the story of Persia through its art and culture.

It's a story with deep roots. In the pre-Christian era, the Achaemenid Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great (c600-530 BC), grew to extend from northern India to Egypt. It was larger than any other empire in history. But in subsequent centuries, Persia's culture often came under threat, as conquerors brought a new religion, Islam, which gradually replaced the ancient faith of Zoroastrianism, and a new language, too.

And yet, as Ahmed explores in the series, Persia always remained distinct, with art and language crucial to preserving its culture: even up to the present day, these creative outlets have been wielded as weapons of resistance and defiance.

To trace Persia's cultural history, Ahmed explores a country that few of us travel to, but which is home to some spectacular sights. The ceremonial capital of Persepolis, its ruins declared a World Heritage Site in 1979, are extraordinary – a grand reminder of the sophistication of the Achaemenid Empire. Ahmed sees "the ruins of an empire that very nearly forgot itself" as she journeys around the country. She wanders through bazaars where it's all too easy to get lost and gazes upon a temple where a holy fire has burned for over 1,000 years. It's a fascinating watch that brings Persian culture to life.



A stone column topped by griffins graces the ruins of Persepolis

BBC/CRAIG HASTINGS X2, GETTY IMAGES X1

Jade Goody stands with Davina McCall at the *Big Brother 3* final. After the show, Goody was famous just for being famous, like many of today's reality TV stars

The screens have eyes

Watching Us / BBC Radio 4, scheduled for June

In 1999, a new television series made its debut in the Netherlands. *Big Brother*, which would become a vastly profitable international franchise for TV production company Endemol, rested on the then radical idea that ordinary people going about their lives could make for compelling viewing.

The series heralded a new wave of shows where people would become, as Jade Goody did via the British version of *Big Brother*, famous for being famous. And owing to the internet, for many of these programmes, the line between participants and viewers became increasingly blurred.

Fast forward two decades and, on TV at least, surveillance is no longer something to be feared, instead being welcomed as a means to a career that, all being well, will endure even after the cameras have stopped rolling.

How we got to this strange new world is the subject of a series that features interviews with many of reality TV's movers and shakers. They include Bill Pruitt, producer of the US version of *The Apprentice*; reality stars who ironically say they lost contact with reality after experiencing fame; and an American documentarian, RJ Cutler, who pitched Fox a series where the winner would be in the running for the presidency a full decade before Donald Trump used reality TV as a springboard to reach the White House in 2016.

It's a series that arrives at an apposite moment. As a result of Covid 19, where video calling our loved ones and co workers has largely replaced face to face interactions, there's a sense that we're all, however unwillingly, reality TV stars these days.

An advert for the US version of *The Apprentice*, hung outside Trump Tower in 2004

Hidden treasures

Stories From The Vaults / Smithsonian, scheduled for Thursday 18 June

Even with its 19 different museums and nine research centres, the US Smithsonian Institution has the space to display only a tiny percentage of the 156 million artefacts it holds. And this provides a perfect excuse for Canadian comedian and actor Tom Cavanagh (*The Flash*) to go behind the scenes to see some of the items the public can't currently view.

As it transpires, this involves exploring vaults which are so labyrinthine that a guide seems not only advisable but essential, if Cavanagh is to avoid getting hopelessly lost. The treasures he sees up close include the world's very first videogame, Thomas Edison's earliest light bulbs and reminding us that the Smithsonian also finances scientific investigations into the natural world an exotic collection of flesh eating beetles.

Matthew Rhys shows a new side to beloved lawyer Perry Mason

Mediterranean adventures

A Greek Odyssey With Bettany Hughes / Channel 5, scheduled for Friday 12 June

According to Greek mythology, the Trojan War began when Paris of Troy eloped with Helen – wife of Menelaus, the king of Sparta. Whether the conflict ever took place is a matter of debate among ancient historians, but stories of the war and its aftermath – brought to life by Homer's epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* – continue to fascinate us. Whereas *The Iliad* focuses primarily on the conflict, *The Odyssey* recounts Odysseus's decade-long journey home after the fighting had finished.

Classicist Bettany Hughes follows in the text's wake in her new series, as she island-hops her way across the Mediterranean. Hughes is terrific company, serving as our knowledgeable guide to the past.

The series begins in the archipelago of Fourni in the Aegean, once a place that lay at the crossroads of north-south trade routes. Here, in the company of underwater archaeologist George Koutsouflakis, she hears how 58 ancient shipwrecks have been identified in the region – a sobering reminder that shipborne travel was a dangerous business in ancient times.

Elsewhere in the first of six episodes, Hughes experiences ancient hospitality in Chios, takes a dip in the thermal waters of Lesbos and, in Samos – once home to Pythagoras – sees how mathematical engineering was key to building the Tunnel of Eupalinos, a famous subterranean aqueduct.

Bettany Hughes journeys around the Mediterranean on her own odyssey

Darker side of the law

Perry Mason / Sky Atlantic, scheduled for June

Perry Mason has been immortalised by the actor Raymond Burr (1917 93), who first played the attorney on television in 1957 and continued for more than 35 years. Yet the character dates from the 1930s, being the creation of lawyer and best selling writer Erle Stanley Gardner (1889 1970).

It's to this decade that a new big budget HBO mini series looks, and it promises a rather grittier take on Mason and his early career. The show picks up the story in 1932, when the Great Depression was taking its toll on America. While the rest of the US continued to struggle, Los Angeles was bouncing back and even beginning to boom, thanks to industries such as oil and the movie business. It was just the place, then, for principled and clever defence attorney Mason to make his name albeit one working, when we first meet him, as a gumshoe investigator and haunted by his wartime experiences.

Matthew Rhys, who found fame in Cold War spy drama *The Americans*, plays Mason, while Juliet Rylance portrays Della Street. The cast also includes John Lithgow.

The young face of fascism

Jojo Rabbit / streaming now and available on DVD

Taika Waititi's take on a small boy, Jojo (Roman Griffin Davis), growing up as the Third Reich disintegrates around him offers lashings of screwball comedy as well as bittersweet moments.

It's largely a study of how children adapt to the prevailing beliefs around them. Jojo, egged on by his imaginary friend, Adolf Hitler (Waititi), dreams of being an Aryan superman, but his perspective is called into question by Elsa (Thomasin McKenzie), a Jewish girl who's hiding in his attic.

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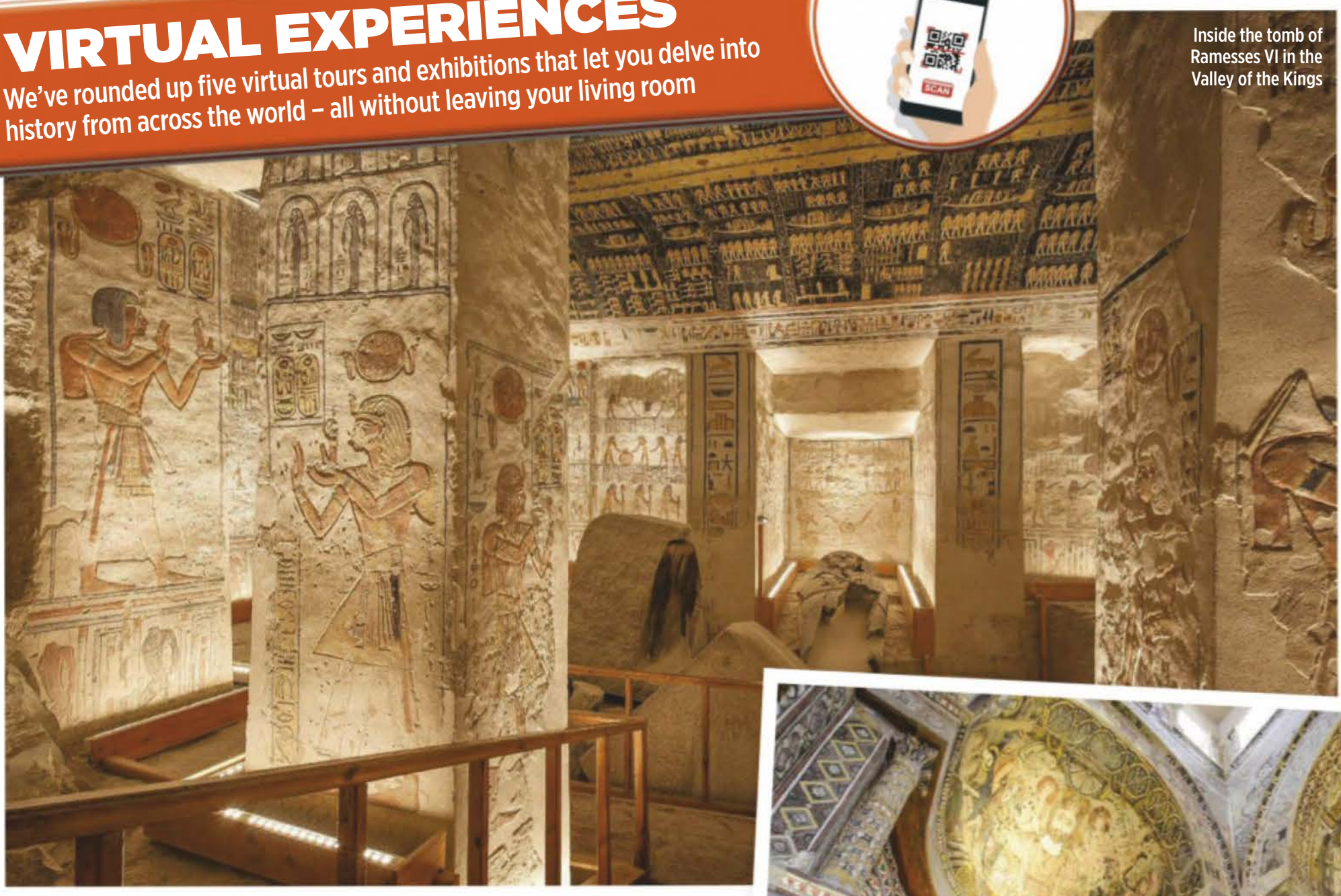
EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

WHAT TO SEE AND WHERE TO VISIT IN THE WIDER WORLD OF HISTORY

VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES

We've rounded up five virtual tours and exhibitions that let you delve into history from across the world – all without leaving your living room

SCAN THE QR CODE ON YOUR SMART DEVICE



Inside the tomb of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Kings

SCAN ME

Explore Egypt

EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY

bit.ly/3bZEkhv

Ancient treasures are strung across Egypt's landscape, from imposing tombs intended for the upper echelons of ancient Egyptian society to places of worship emblazoned with intricate artworks that dazzle the eye. Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has created a host of virtual tours that put you in the heart of these incredible places, taking you on a trip from Pharaoh Ramesses VI's tomb at the Valley of the Kings all the way to the Roman catacombs of Kom al-Shoqafa at Alexandria.

The ancient Egyptians were deeply religious, and they had a complex set of beliefs about the afterlife. Rather than viewing death as the end, they instead thought people could live again after dying if they followed the proper burial practices – with pharaohs either sailing around the sky in the god Re's sun boat, or uniting with the god Osiris in the underworld. As such, constructing elaborate pyramids to house the remains of pharaohs – replete with all the items they could possibly need in the afterlife – was embedded in Egyptian culture. The earliest Egyptian pyramid on record, the step pyramid complex of Djoser, built at Saqqara – and part of this virtual tour – was constructed in c2630 BC, and the practice continued until Pepi II of the Sixth Dynasty (and then experienced a revival in the 12th Dynasty).

The Red Monastery is thought to have been built in the 4th century AD

You can virtually explore Egyptian tombs, churches and even a zoological museum. Trek down the passageway that leads to Ramesses VI's burial chamber and even take a peek at his reconstructed sarcophagus lid. Or step inside the Red Monastery – dubbed Egypt's "most important historical church" by the American Research Center in Egypt – and admire its sumptuous painted interior.

SHUTTERSTOCK X1, GETTY IMAGES X6

Wands at the ready – you can brush up on magical history with the British Library

SCAN ME

Marvel at magic

HARRY POTTER: A HISTORY OF MAGIC

bit.ly/35g2YYl

The British Library has released a number of online exhibitions, including a fascinating foray into the magical world of *Harry Potter*. As well as featuring extracts of JK Rowling's original manuscripts, the exhibition showcases historical artefacts associated with magic. You can, for instance, divine the recipe for the philosopher's stone from the magnificently illustrated Ripley Scroll, or take a whistle stop tour around some of the occult objects housed at the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic in Cornwall. Classes straight out of the wizarding world are also available, teaching you how to properly harvest a mandrake, as well as how many types of unicorn there are.

There are dozens more exhibitions on offer on the British Library's website (*bit.ly/2KLDetD*), ranging from a presentation that delves into the roles that animals have played in literature, to the compelling stories of women who were involved in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s and '80s.

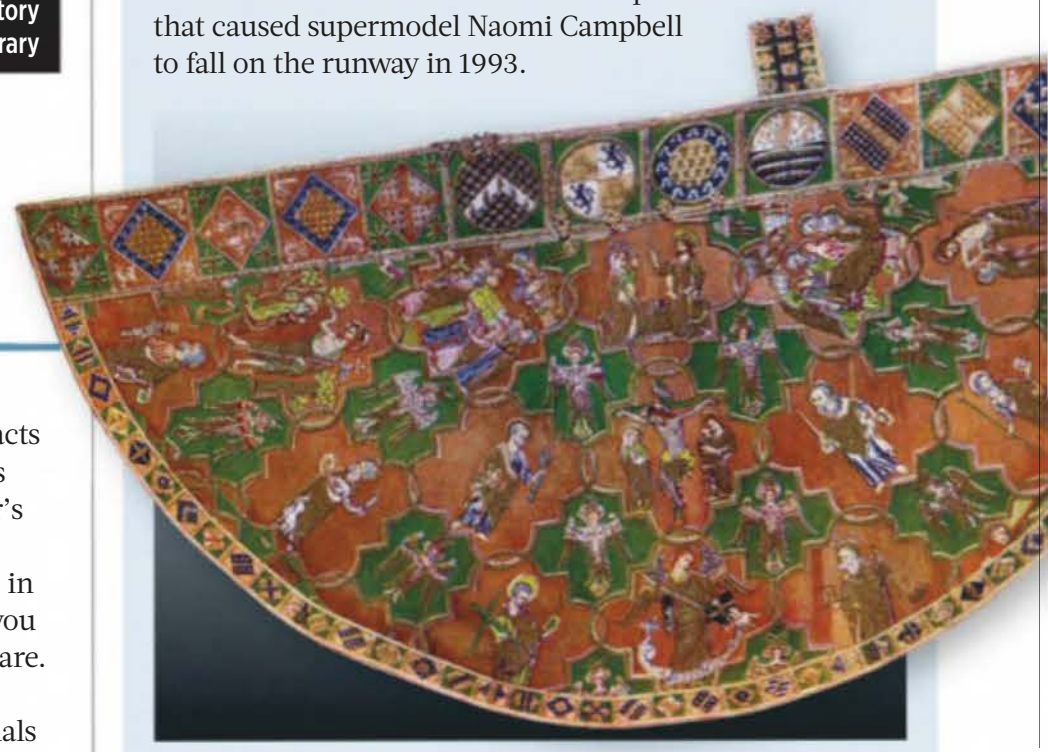
Find out about fashion

THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

bit.ly/2xhHNso

SCAN ME

Fashion lovers and history buffs alike will adore the V&A's online exhibitions. You can examine exquisite medieval embroidery, including the Syon Cope (a decorated cape worn by the clergy) that's unique in using silver thread to depict Jesus on the cross. The 'Gallery of Fashion' showcases iconic pieces from the V&A's collections, including a 19th-century banyan (an informal robe worn by European men) patterned with Chinese dragons, a gown dripping with pearls, beads and jewels that Elizabeth II ordered in 1957, and the electric blue Vivienne Westwood platform shoes that caused supermodel Naomi Campbell to fall on the runway in 1993.



The Syon Cope may have been part of an outfit worn to celebrate mass

Search through science

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

bit.ly/2YdgFG9

SCAN ME

The Science Museum Group – which operates five museums across the UK – has digitised more than 325,000 items from its enviable collection, ranging from blood-stained surgical tools to vintage videogame cassettes. You can also view many of its artefacts as 3D models, including a 1934 Enigma machine. These contraptions were used by the Germans to send coded messages during World War II and were believed to be impossible to decipher – until a group of Bletchley Park mathematicians managed to crack them.

You can also explore objects that have travelled to space, including Helen Sharman's Sokol spacesuit. Sharman was the first British national to go to space; she wore the specially designed suit in May 1991, when she flew on board a Soyuz spacecraft to the Russian-operated Mir space station.

Each Sokol spacesuit is individually made to fit the astronaut

Appreciate art

FACES OF FRIDA

bit.ly/3cVT3dc

SCAN ME

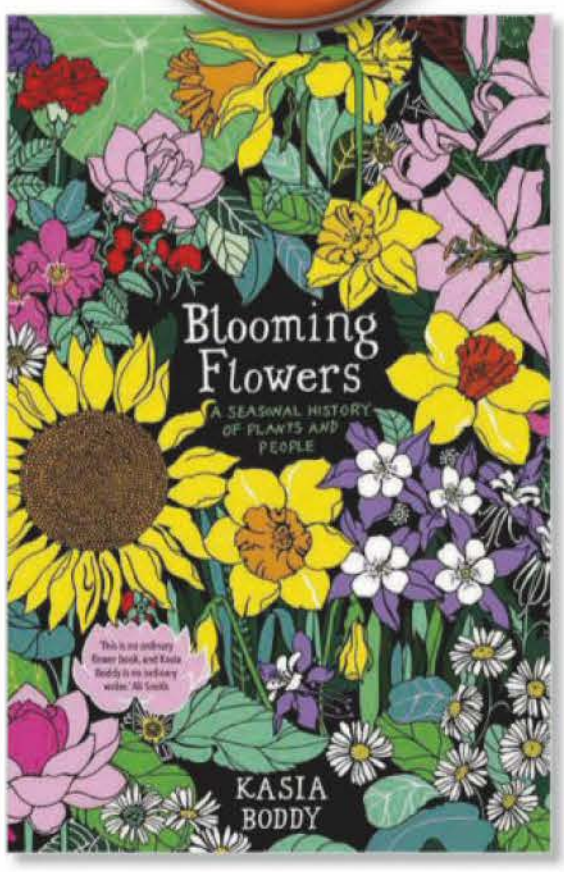
A consortium of museums has created a series of online exhibitions dedicated to Frida Kahlo that paint a passionate, sometimes painful, picture of the 20th-century artist. Suffering from polio as a child, Kahlo was involved in a near-fatal accident at the age of 18 and was afflicted by chronic pain through her life. Many of her paintings delve into her feelings about pain – as examined in an exhibition dedicated to Kahlo's relationship with her body. And a trip around Kahlo's bathroom in her 'Blue House' is particularly revealing, containing intimate objects that her husband, Diego Rivera, preserved for more than 50 years after her death in 1954.

Frida Kahlo became a powerful proponent of Mexican culture

BOOKS & AUDIO BOOKS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS

BOOK OF THE MONTH



Blooming Flowers: A Seasonal History of Plants and People

By Kasia Boddy
Yale, £14.99, hardback, 256 pages

Flowers live in our cultures as well as in nature. Their symbolism is historically intertwined with our highs and lows, births and deaths, hopes and fears. Across 16 case studies, Kasia Boddy explores how sunflowers and snowdrops, carnations and chrysanthemums were woven into the fabric of society, from nationalist movements to online dating. It's beautifully produced, too, with striking images garlanded throughout.

"Flowers are one of the most ancient mediums through which human beings communicate – about every kind of matter"

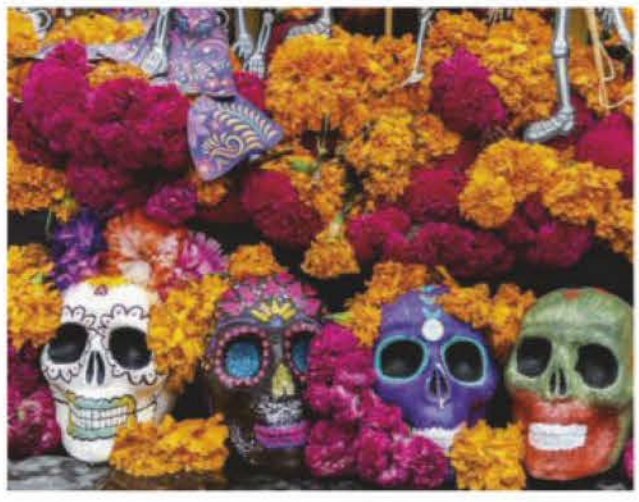
KASIA BODDY delves into our complex and symbolic relationship with flowers, tracing the myriad branches of meaning that blooms have historically held for various people across the globe

What insights can we gain from exploring the past through flowers?
Human history has relied on flowering plants from its very beginnings. We eat their leaves, tubers, fruits and seeds. We wear fabrics made from their fibres, and perfumes made from their oils. Flowers are also one of the most ancient of mediums through which human beings communicate about every kind of personal, political and spiritual matter.

How did you decide which flowers to include in your book?
There are at least 300,000 known species of flowering plants, so it was hard! I gravitated toward flowers that had diverse and international histories such as the daffodil, which is important to both West Indians and the Welsh. I was fascinated by the way associations linger and evolve, and what happens when plants, and ideas about plants, move.

How did ancient people make sense of their lives through flowers?
Many flowering plants played a major role in the lives of ancient peoples all over the world. In Egyptian cosmology, *Nymphaea caerula* (the blue lotus) represented the emergence of the sun and life. The flower's perfume was also thought to aid in reanimating the dead.

Conversely, in Central America, the many species of *Tagetes* (marigold) took on great importance. *Tagetes erecta*, or the African marigold, is still grown today for the Day of the Dead ceremonies. Offerings of marigolds are placed on graves and home altars, with trails of yellow petals connecting the two: the colour is important, but it's the flower's pungent scent that apparently summons the spirits of the dead.



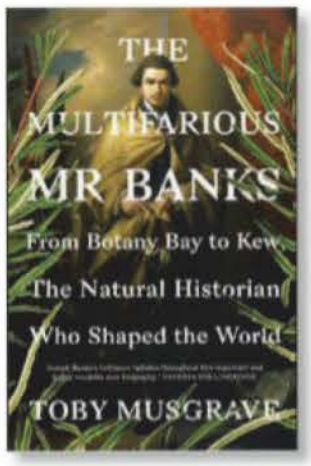
African marigolds are traditional Day of the Dead offerings

What role did flowers play in the women's suffrage movement?
The Suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) often represented their colours green, purple and white with violets and lilies of the valley. And in 1909, they staged a 'Women's Exhibition' that featured a model voting booth into which Christabel Pankhurst [Emmeline's daughter], herself lavishly bedecked with flowers, symbolically deposited a ballot paper.

But it was another nine years before some British women got the vote, and the campaign became increasingly militant if no less flowery. Jane Brailsford went to prison after approaching a Newcastle barricade with an axe hidden in "an innocent looking bouquet of chrysanthemums".

Are there any particular flowers that stood out during your research?
Hard to choose! But I'll pick the saffron crocus. As well as being an expensive spice, it was also used as a dye. The Romans used it as eye shadow, and centuries later Protestants associated it with Catholicism and passed laws forbidding clothes coloured with the dye in Ireland. In India, saffron had long been associated with Hinduism, and in 1947, saffron was chosen as one of the three colours of the national flag. Today, 'saffronisation' describes Hindu nationalist attempts to control Indian society, adding yet another meaning.

SIX MORE BOOKS TO READ



The Multifarious Mr Banks: From Botany Bay to Kew, the Natural Historian who Shaped the World

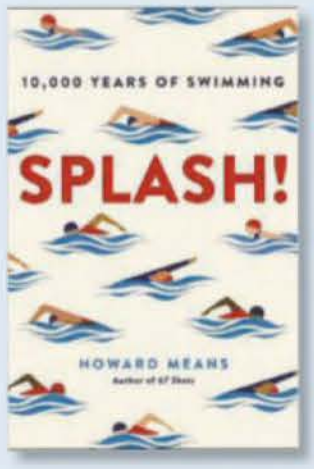
By Toby Musgrave
Yale, £20, hardback, 386 pages

Joseph Banks can certainly lay claim to having shaped the world in all manner of ways. One of the crew of James Cook's 1768 voyage to Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia, he was the first European to study the region's plants and people in depth. He was also instrumental in turning London's Kew Gardens into a leading botanical resource. This biography explores the attributes that led Banks to success, and the reasons why he has since faded into obscurity.

Splash! 10,000 Years of Swimming

By Howard Means
Allen & Unwin, £16.99, hardback, 336 pages

Water, essential for our survival as a species, also courses through human existence in another way: as something to swim in. This big picture history runs from the ancient Nile and Bath's Roman baths to today's record setting athletes celebrating the crawl, the kick and the flop in all their fun and functionality. But don't think that it's all surface and no depth: as the author points out, swimming also has much to tell us about a period's fashion and faith, social mores and sporting achievements.



The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World – and Globalisation began

By Valerie Hansen
Viking, £20, hardback, 320 pages

We all know about 1492 when Columbus famously sailed the ocean blue but this book argues that we need to shift our gaze to 1000 AD. It was then, Valerie Hansen suggests, that people began to take their first meaningful steps towards the international, interconnected world that we know today. Travelling from the Viking north to Africa and many other points besides, it's an eye opening take on how developed our ancestors truly were over 1,000 years ago.

Battle of Britain: The Pilots and Planes that Made History

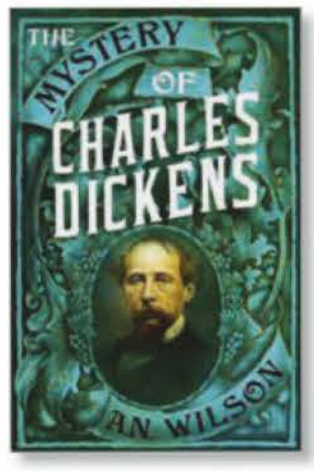
By Simon Pearson and Ed Gorman
Hodder & Stoughton, £20, hardback, 240 pages

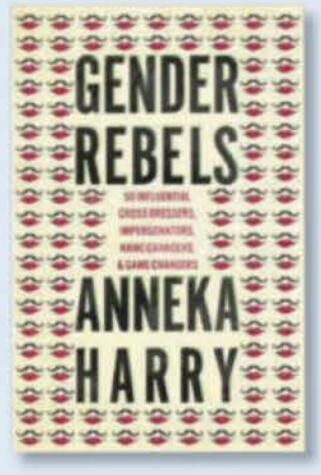
Defending Britain's skies from heavy attacks by the Luftwaffe from July to October 1940 was a key moment in early World War II. Skilfully foregrounding the reminiscences of 18 airmen on both sides of the conflict, some of which haven't been fully told before, this account highlights the importance of individual men and their machines in withstanding the Nazis' aerial onslaught. Photographs, a timeline and a hefty further reading list all contextualise the stories, too.

The Mystery of Charles Dickens

By AN Wilson
Atlantic Books, £17.99, hardback, 368 pages

A prolific chronicler of the great and the good he's written biographies of the Queen, Darwin and Prince Albert in the past five years alone AN Wilson now turns his attention to Charles Dickens. How much of the novelist's own life, and his experiences in Victorian England, made its way into the pages of his phenomenally popular books? What other forces inspired his vivid imagination and eye for character? And why do those characters still captivate today's readers, 150 years on?





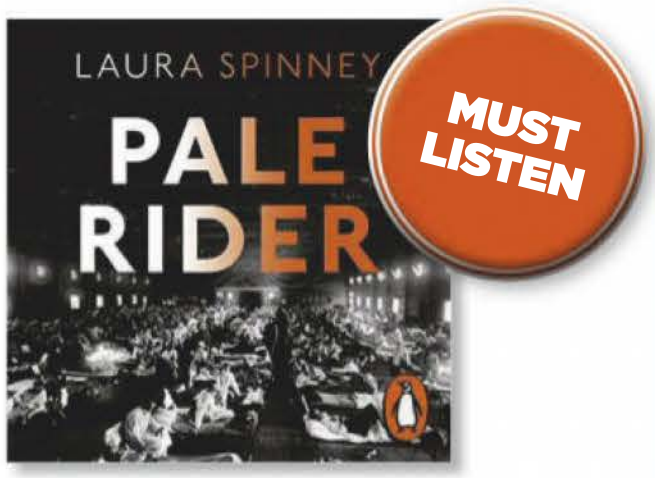
Gender Rebels: 50 Influential Cross-Dressers, Impersonators, Name-Changers and Game-Changers

By Anneka Harry
Little A, £8.99, paperback, 286 pages

This look at women who passed as men to make it in society is informal and irreverent, studded with jokes about bad footwear and Ghostbusters. Covering beloved figures, including Joan of Arc, as well as less well known individuals, such as Chinese feminist Qiu Jin, this is one of the very few history books to end on a quote from the Spice Girls.

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS X1, GETTY IMAGES X1

OUR PICK OF AUDIO BOOKS



Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How it Changed the World

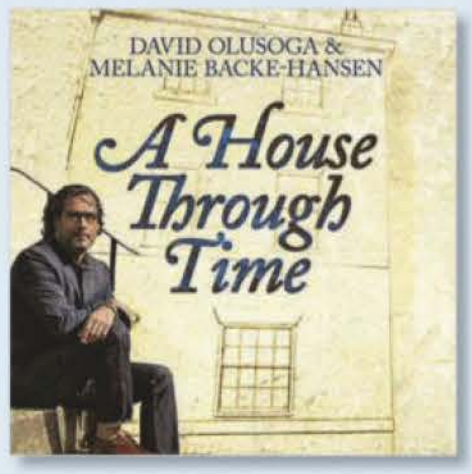
By Laura Spinney (narrated by Paul Hodgson)
Penguin, £25.99, runtime 10 hours and four minutes

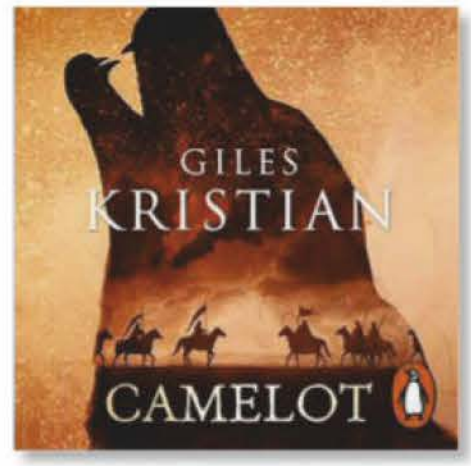
This account of 1918's devastating Spanish Flu, first published in 2018 and newly available as an audiobook, has acquired new significance in the wake of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Yet it's worth considering just how far reaching the pandemic of a century ago was: it infected a third of the world's population, and left more than 50 million dead. Reflecting the global nature of the disease, Laura Spinney's narrative is international in scope and highlights the ingenuity of human endeavour in the face of crippling odds.

A House Through Time

By David Olusoga and Melanie Backe-Hansen (narrated by Ben Onwukwe)
Picador, £11.99, runtime 10 hours and 34 minutes

David Olusoga's hit BBC television series gets the audiobook treatment. If you've seen the show (currently airing), you'll know the thrill of discovering the fortunes of the people who lived at the same address, decades apart and here Olusoga (together with fellow historian Melanie Backe Hansen) shares tips for investigating the people who made your house their home. And the plights of entire neighbourhoods that rose and fell offer a wider perspective.





Camelot

By Giles Kristian (narrated by Philip Stevens)
Penguin, £31.99, runtime 20 hours and 10 minutes

Giles Kristian's foray into the world of Arthurian legend, 2018's bestselling *Lancelot*, here gets an atmospheric sequel. With the first book's title character absent, along with Merlin and Arthur, Britain's hopes of fending off rampaging Saxons and the attendant perils of fear and famine rest on the unlikely shoulders of a young novice. If you know your Gawains from your Guineveres, you'll have fun spotting the twists on the saga and, for everyone else, there's plenty of mystery and drama to enjoy.

HistoryExtra Podcast

Each month we bring you three of our favourite interviews from the HistoryExtra podcast archives...

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THIS MONTH... three podcasts on the Vikings

Viking Britain

https://bit.ly/36e2hPO

As a former British Museum curator and the author of several bestselling books on the Vikings, Thomas Williams is perfectly placed to guide us through life in Britain under Norse rule. This episode, from 2017, is packed with colourful stories plucked from the period that bring the occupation to life. As well as chronicling the raids and invasions, the terror and the turmoil, Williams also considers the longer term ways in which the Vikings changed culture and society. It's enthralling and evocative.

The global Vikings

https://bit.ly/2ZgRxPi

As much explorers as they were invaders, the Vikings ventured far beyond their native Scandavian shores, pillaging and settling as far afield as what we would today know as France, Russia and America. This 2019 interview with medieval historian Levi Roach places the fascinating Norse story within the full context of time and space, presenting a more rounded picture of a hugely interesting people. It's detailed stuff, made truly accessible by answers peppered with present-day parallels.

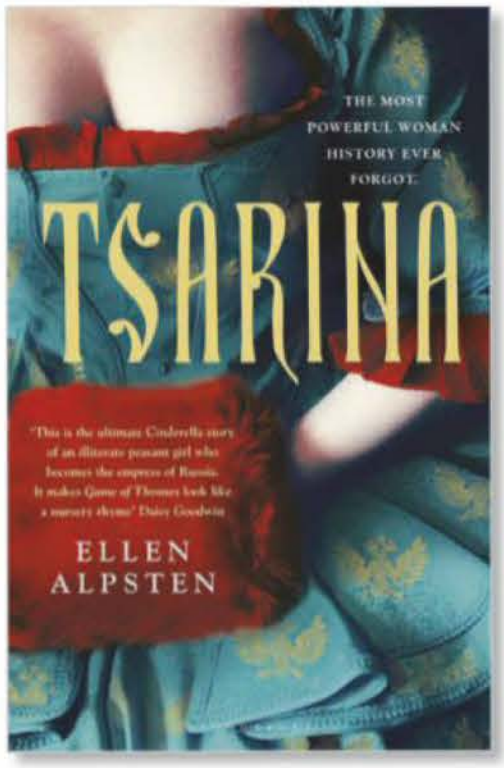
Vikings on screen

https://bit.ly/2ZhX9c0

The long running *Vikings* TV series, inspired by the bloody sagas of Ragnar Lothbrok, has played a significant role in the recent resurgence of interest in all things Norse and a sequel series is in the works. In this 2018 episode, screenwriter and producer Michael Hirst discusses the challenges of adapting the distant past for the small screen, and his take on why the Vikings remain so popular. It's a must listen for anyone who needs their *Vikings* fix before the final series airs later this year.

GETTY IMAGES X2, DREAMSTIME X2

HISTORICAL FICTION



Tsarina

Ellen Alpsten
Bloomsbury Publishing, £16.99, hardback, 496 pages

Spring 1699: illegitimate, destitute and strikingly beautiful, Marta has survived the brutal Russian winter in her remote Baltic village. Sold into household labour at the age of 15, she survives by committing a crime that will force her to go on the run.

Falling prey to the Great Northern War, Marta cheats death at every turn, finding work as a washerwoman at a battle camp where she encounters Peter the Great. Fuelled by ambition, desire and the sheer will to live, Marta will become Catherine I of Russia. But her rise to the top is ridden with peril: how long will she survive the machinations of Peter's court, and more importantly, Peter himself?

Excerpt

In which Marta describes the death of her husband, Peter the Great

He is dead. My beloved husband, the mighty Tsar of all the Russias, has died – and just in time.

Moments before death came for him, Peter called for a quill and paper to be brought to him in his bedchamber in the Winter Palace. My heart almost stalled. He had not forgotten, he was going to drag me down with him. When he lost consciousness for the last time and the darkness drew him closer to its heart, the quill slipped from his fingers. Black ink spattered the soiled sheets; time held its breath. What had the Tsar wanted to settle with that last effort of his tremendous spirit?

I knew the answer.

Time spread slowly, like oil on water. Peter had imprinted himself on our souls like his signet ring in hot wax. It seemed impossible that the world hadn't careened to a halt at his passing. My husband, the greatest will ever to impose itself on Russia, had been more than our ruler. He had been our fate. He was still mine.

Q&A
Ellen Alpsten

Ellen works as an author and as a journalist for international publications such as *Vogue*, *Standpoint* and *CN Traveller*. *Tsarina*, the first and only account of the incredible rise of Catherine I of Russia from serf to empress, is her debut novel.

Why were you drawn to writing Marta's story?
Marta's rise from illegitimate serf to become the first-ever reigning Empress of Russia, Catherine I, has fascinated me since I was 13. I read Leo Sievers' book *Germans and Russians*, in which he charts our shared history. Later, I was stunned to discover that nothing more could be read about her – not even a novel. Most people confuse her with her great-niece and namesake, Catherine the Great, so I knew there was work to be done to tell her story.

Marta's story is a real rags-to-riches Cinderella tale – what sense did you get of her character?
Initially, I fell for her trajectory from serf to empress. But my fascination with her grew proportionally to my research. She never surrendered; she wasn't academically schooled and instead acted with courage and cunning. She had always relied on her own wits for survival, and this didn't change when she became Peter's consort. But she had a softer side, too: the Russians are a communal people, and Marta certainly counted on family and friendship.

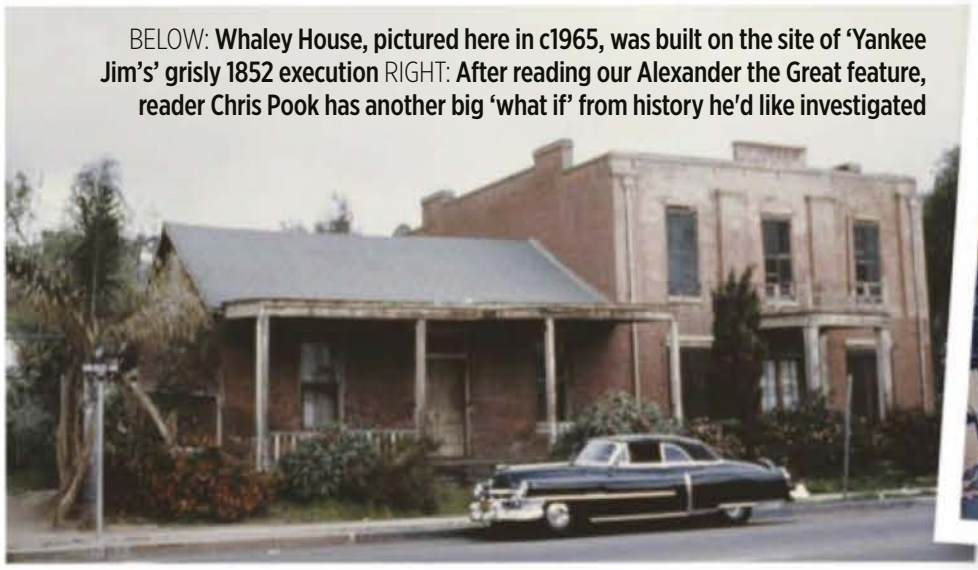
How did you research the book?
The proper research for *Tsarina* focused on the early Romanovs. The text I relied on the most, perhaps, was Prof Lindsey Hughes' *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*. I didn't write a single sentence of the novel until I'd spent a year researching. After that, I wrote every afternoon, with half a dozen annotated reference books within reach.

Why did you choose to write Marta's story as a novel rather than as a work of non-fiction?
The sheer scope of her story requires the sprawling canvas and cast that only a novel can offer. Her life was marked by opposites: callous cruelty and overwhelming empathy; overt hostility towards all things foreign, yet selfless hospitality to strangers. There are tantalising blanks in her life, which I filled with my imagination.

What one thing would you like readers to take away from your book?
If the story of Marta, who observes her adopted home country with the keen eyes of a foreigner, helps a reader understand the Russian soul further and inspires them to learn more about this mighty country, then I am delighted. And Catherine's ascent bears testimony to the sheer strength of human nature and the will to survive.

ANDREAS STIRNBERG

LETTERS



BELOW: **Whaley House, pictured here in c1965, was built on the site of 'Yankee Jim's' grisly 1852 execution** RIGHT: **After reading our Alexander the Great feature, reader Chris Pook has another big 'what if' from history he'd like investigated**

GHOSTLY GOINGS-ON

The article 'Top 10 Botched Executions' (March 2020) told of the historical capital punishments going horribly awry as though to exemplify the grisly scenes of capital punishment as a reminder of societal retributions that were largely 'an eye for an eye'. It also reminded me of a story of a condemned man whose ordeal of execution was so unbearably painful that he is still apparently roaming around his execution site with an eternal lingering attachment to his earthly life.

Here in southern California, the story of James Robinson (aka Yankee Jim), who was executed for an attempted grand larceny in San Diego in 1852, is something of haunted folklore that attracts tourists and ghost hunters. He was hanged on gallows off the back of a wagon, but being a tall man with long legs, he initially resisted being killed by keeping his feet in the wagon but was at last pulled off. His body then swung like a pendulum until he was strangled to death.

It was on this very site of hanging that one Thomas Whaley, who witnessed the execution, built his dream house. He and his family soon began to hear unexpected phantom footsteps – as if being made by the boots of a large man as well as windows mysteriously unlatching and opening. The Whaleys' youngest daughter, who lived in the house until 1953, was certain it was the ghost of Yankee Jim. The Whaley House is now a museum, but it's thought 'Yankee Jim' still roams around the place. Indeed, it has been certified by the US Department of Commerce as being genuinely haunted.

Stephanie Joori Suh, California

ALTERNATIVE HISTORY

I recently bought the magazine for the first time and was fascinated to read the 'What If' piece on Alexander the Great (May 2020). May I suggest the possibility of a future article: 'What if Napoleon had been born Genoese?'

In 1768, the city state of Genoa ceded the island of Corsica to the French King Louis XV in settlement of huge debts, and apart from a short period under British rule in the 1790s, the island has remained French ever since. A little over a year later, in August 1769, Napoleon was born in Ajaccio. If Genoa had not relinquished Corsica to the French, Napoleon would have been born Genoese. What effect would that have had on European history?

No Waterloo, no Austerlitz, no invasion of Russia, no rampaging through the Iberian Peninsula, and no Code Napoleon: the basis of French law today.

Genoa, a powerful maritime city state, had ruled Corsica since 1284 after conquering the island from its main rival, Pisa, and became part of the newly created Kingdom of Italy in 1861.

Chris Pook, Dorset

CROSSWORD WINNERS

The lucky winners of the crossword from issue 80 are:

M Cave, London
L Lynn, Tyne and Wear
A Gee, Buckinghamshire

Congratulations! You've each won a copy of *Instant History* by Sandra Lawrence

Please note, there will be a delay in posting your prize due to the current coronavirus crisis.

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COMPETITION - POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

Do you know anyone aged 6-13? If so, there's still time for them to enter our 'Postcards from the Past' competition for a chance to be published in the magazine and online, and win some prizes!

All they need to do to enter is pretend that they are a historical character living in a historical lockdown and write us a short letter from the perspective of that person. You can find all the competition information, as well as details on how to enter, a postcard template and full terms and conditions at *historyextra.com/postcards*

Closing date for entries is 1 July 2020.

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NEXT ISSUE

••• ON SALE 9 JULY •••

ANCIENT OLYMPICS

Head to the Olympiad of 436 BC with our ultimate guide to the Games – from where to stay and what to eat, to the excitement of the sporting events and the perils of cheating...

PLUS...

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NORMANS WORLD WARS IN COLOUR **TRAILBLAZING SWIMMER GERTRUDE EDERLE** MARTIN LUTHER UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT **CANINE WAR HERO SERGEANT STUBBY** AND MUCH MORE...

BBC HISTORY REVEALED

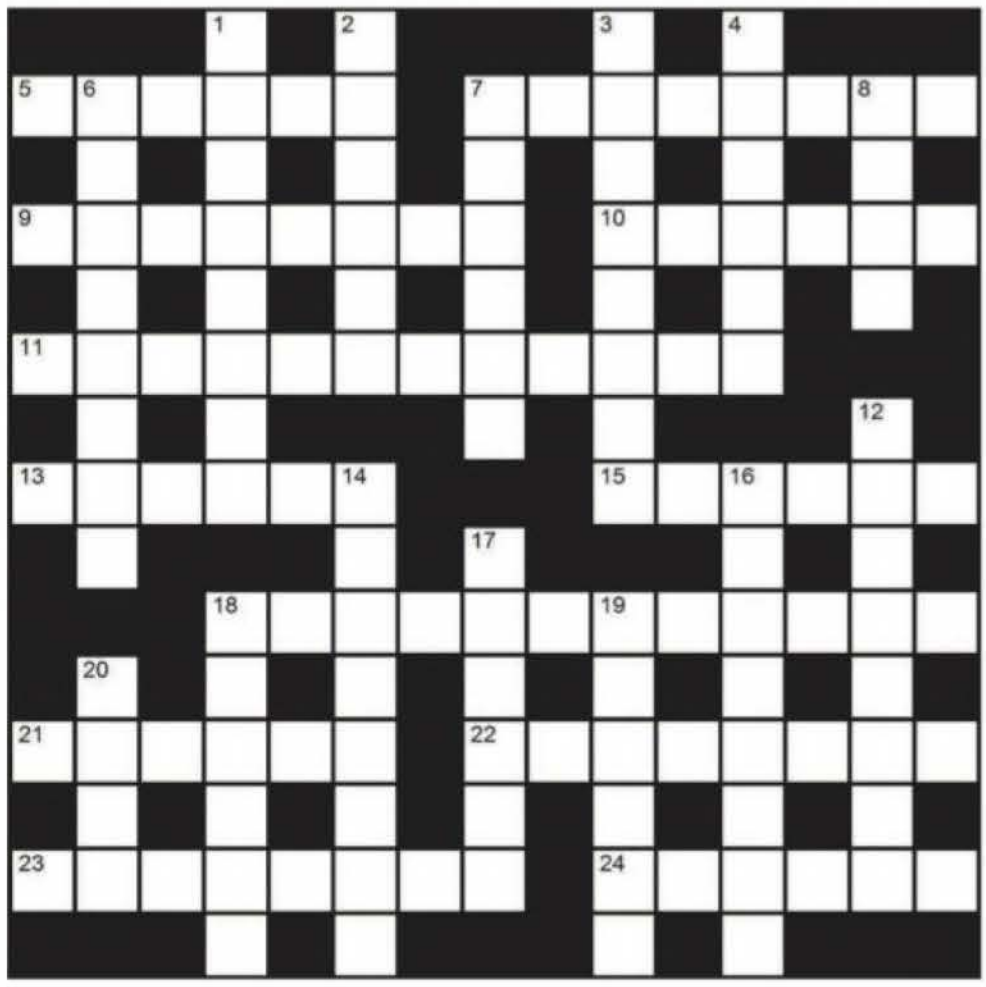
ALAMY

CROSSWORD & PUZZLES

TEST YOURSELF WITH OUR COLLECTION OF BRAIN TEASERS

CROSSWORD No. 83

Test your history knowledge to solve our prize puzzle – and you could win a fantastic new book



Set by Richard Smyth

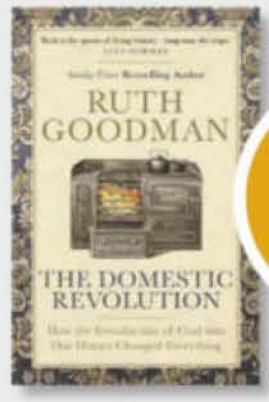
ACROSS

5 In Roman myth, a nymph and counsellor (6)
7 Byname of activist El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (1925–65) (7,1)
9 ___ Brethren, Christian sect founded in 1831 (8)
10 Urban centre of Japan, proclaimed a city in 1889 (6)
11 Henry III, Richard II and Henry V, for example (12)
13 National tree of India (6)
15 Title adopted by rulers in certain Muslim states (6)
18 1935 Errol Flynn film (7,5)
21 Intellectual or creative movement, such as the Frankfurt in social theory or the Chicago in architecture (6)
22 Archaic term for an oboe (8)
23 Historically, a gold coin, minted in Spain (8)
24 English city known to the Saxons as Escanceaster (6)

DOWN

1 Porridge-like medieval dish (8)
2 Gangsters in Japan, also known as gokudo (6)
3 Historical county of the Low Countries (8)
4 Jorge Luis ___ (1899–1986), Argentine writer (6)
6 The Apostle Peter, for one (8)
7 Gustave ___ (1860–1911), Romantic composer (6)
8 Ancient people of Mesoamerica (4)
12 City of Upper Silesia, known from 1953 to 1956 as Stalinogród (8)
14 ___ Bonaparte (1769–1821), 'The Little Corporal' or 'The Corsican Fiend' (8)
16 Al Capp comic strip set in the hillbilly village of Dogpatch (3,5)
17 Pen name of Arthur Llewellyn Jones (1863–1947), author of *The Great God Pan* (1890) (6)
18 Harold 'Bing' ___ (1903–77), US singer and entertainer (6)
19 1938 novel by Jean-Paul Sartre (6)
20 In Greek myth, a nymph of Mount Cithaeron (4)

CHANCE TO WIN



BOOK WORTH £20 FOR FIVE WINNERS

The Domestic Revolution
By Ruth Goodman

HOW TO ENTER

Post entries to **BBC History Revealed, July 2020 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to **july2020@historyrevealedcomps.co.uk** by noon on **1 August 2020**.

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SOLUTION Nº 81

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TRUE OR FALSE

Have you been paying attention? The answers to the following statements can all be found in this issue of *BBC History Revealed*...

A The average age of the RAF 'fighter boys' who flew in the Battle of Britain was 30

B Marcus Aurelius Antoninus I was the nephew of Septimius Severus

C Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands on 2 April 1982

D In 1969, there were more than 51,000 divorces in England and Wales

E Egypt's Red Monastery is thought to have been built in the 4th century AD

HISTORY WORD SEARCH

Can you find the names of ten Roman deities?

ANSWERS BELOW

ROMAN DEITIES

M	M	X	M	I	N	E	R	V	A	J
O	L	L	O	P	A	A	C	G	A	U
M	E	R	C	U	R	Y	C	Q	F	C
H	S	U	N	E	V	N	M	L	E	X
J	U	P	I	T	E	R	N	R	U	C
T	A	V	H	P	N	O	E	Y	D	V
B	J	J	T	N	E	S	Y	E	D	V
O	G	U	M	E	A	E	A	C	O	I
B	N	I	F	J	U	N	O	C	C	A
E	T	E	S	M	A	R	S	R	U	N

APOLLO
JUPITER
MINERVA
VULCAN
CERES
MARS
NEPTUNE
JUNO
MERCURY
VENUS

ANAGRAM

A gift from France

fleabite tryouts

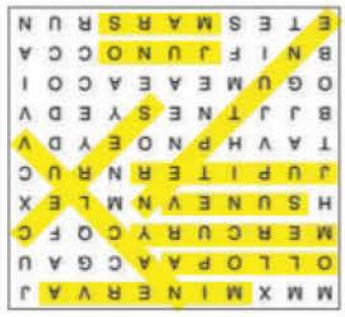
PICTURE ROUND

What is this famous landmark?

A St Peter's Basilica, Rome

B US Capitol Building, Washington, DC

C St Paul's Cathedral, London



ANSWERS

True or False: **A)** False (see p32) **B)** False (p58) **C)** True (see p22) **D)** True (see p48) **E)** True (see p80)

Anagram: Statue of Liberty

Picture Round: **C)** St. Paul's Cathedral, London

History Word Search:

M	M	X	M	I	N	E	R	V	A	J
O	L	L	O	P	A	A	C	G	A	U
M	E	R	C	U	R	Y	C	Q	F	C
H	S	U	N	E	V	N	M	L	E	X
J	U	P	I	T	E	R	N	R	U	C
T	A	V	H	P	N	O	E	Y	D	V
B	J	J	T	N	E	S	Y	E	D	V
O	G	U	M	E	A	E	A	C	O	I
B	N	I	F	J	U	N	O	C	C	A
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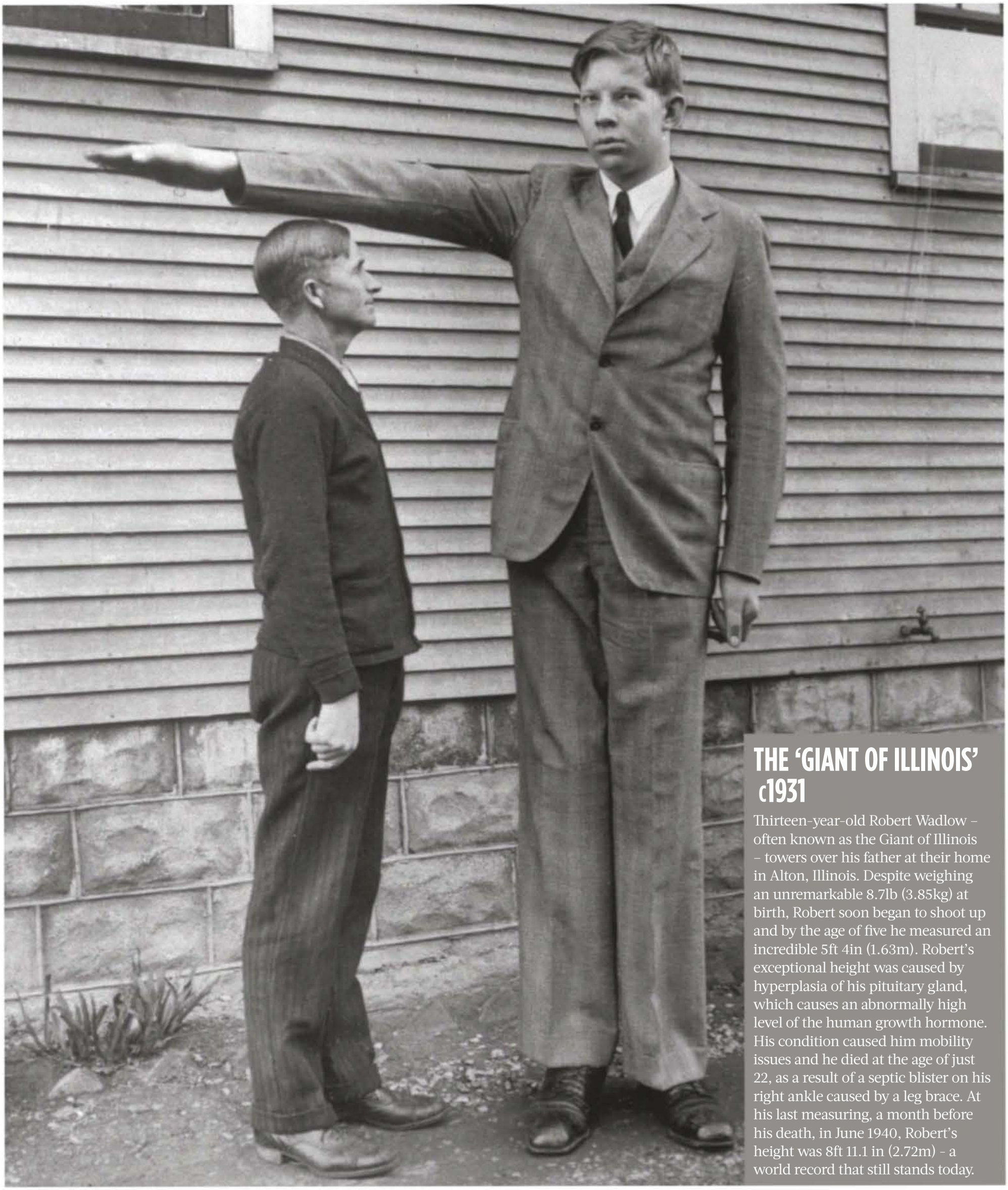
PHOTO FINISH

ARRESTING IMAGES FROM THE ANNALS OF THE PAST



THE 'GIANT OF ILLINOIS' c1931

Thirteen-year-old Robert Wadlow – often known as the Giant of Illinois – towers over his father at their home in Alton, Illinois. Despite weighing an unremarkable 8.7lb (3.85kg) at birth, Robert soon began to shoot up and by the age of five he measured an incredible 5ft 4in (1.63m). Robert's exceptional height was caused by hyperplasia of his pituitary gland, which causes an abnormally high level of the human growth hormone. His condition caused him mobility issues and he died at the age of just 22, as a result of a septic blister on his right ankle caused by a leg brace. At his last measuring, a month before his death, in June 1940, Robert's height was 8ft 11.1 in (2.72m) - a world record that still stands today.

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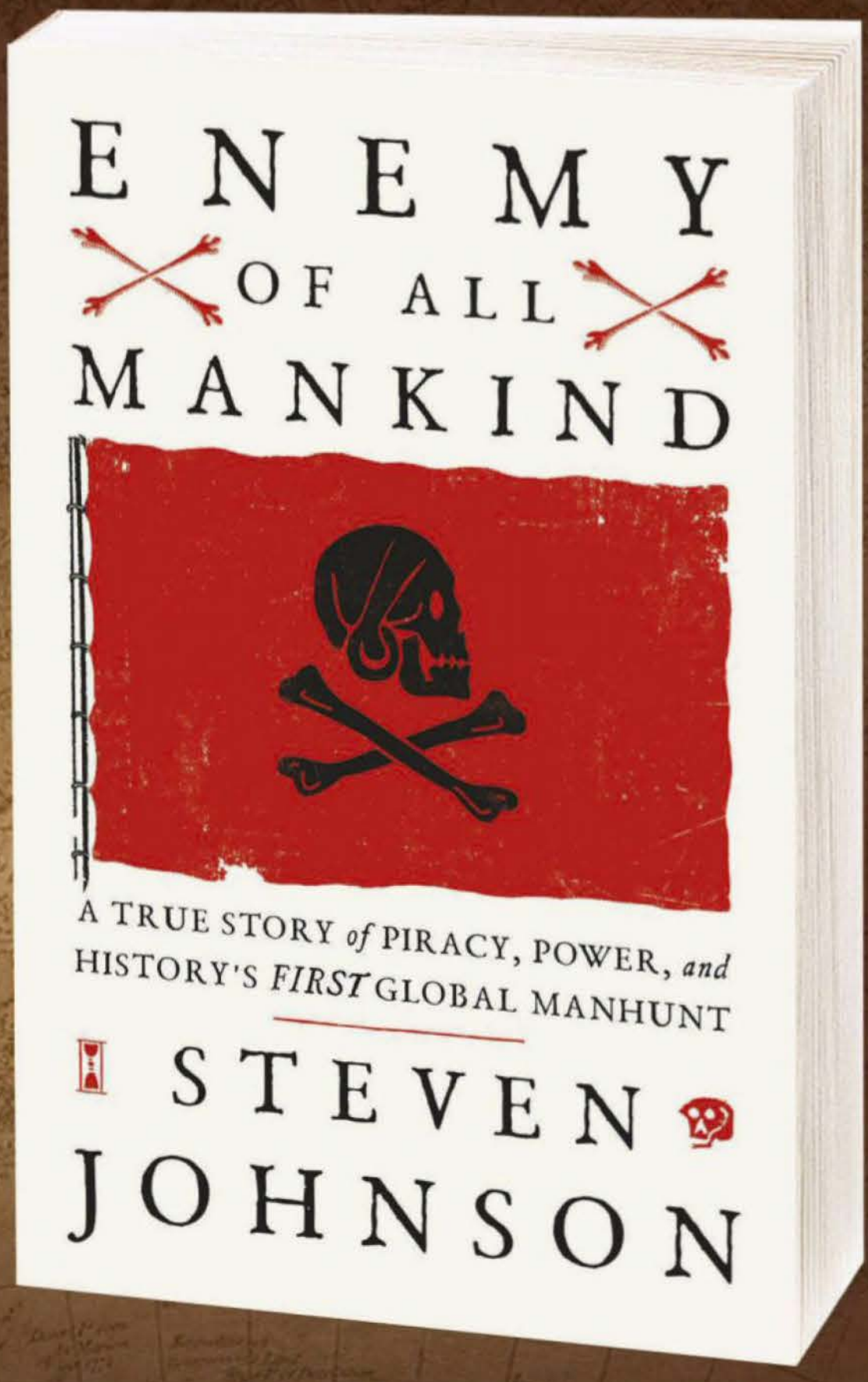
How Did One Notorious Pirate Spark Modern Capitalism?

FROM STEVEN JOHNSON, BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *HOW WE GOT TO NOW*



"A maven of the history of ideas."

—THE GUARDIAN

Henry Every was the 17th century's most notorious pirate. The press published wildly popular–and wildly inaccurate–reports of his nefarious adventures. *Enemy of All Mankind* focuses on one key event—the attack on an Indian treasure ship by Every and his crew. It's the gripping tale of one of the most lucrative crimes in history, the first international manhunt, and the trial of the 17th century.

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